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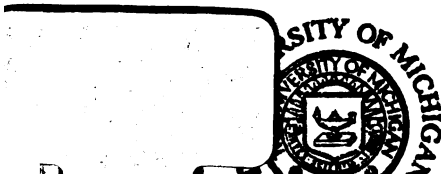
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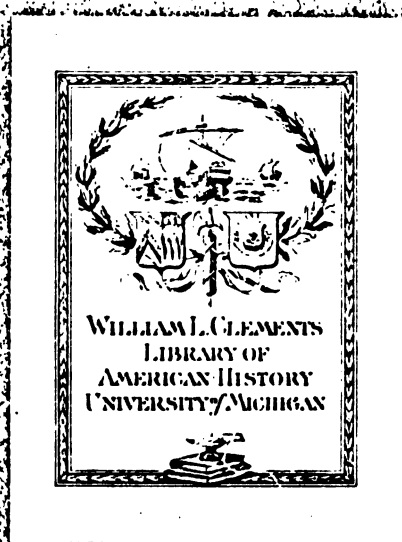
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## PREFACE

IN the spring of 1904 occurred the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the New York Society Library, by far the oldest Library in this State and one of the earliest literary organizations in the country, dating from colonial times with incorporation by royal letters patent under the British Crown. To signalize the event its Board of Trustees decided to issue a commemorative volume, whose preparation was entrusted to me by the Publication Committee, Messrs. George V. N. Baldwin,<sup>1</sup> Beverly Chew, L.H.D., and Henry C. Swords. Soon after undertaking the work, I became curious to discover more about even earlier attempts at establishing Libraries in New York, fugitive allusions to which appear in scattered records and books, and significant vestiges of which are to be seen in the Society Library itself. Presently it grew clear that the real origin of the movement was to be looked for across the water, and, thanks to the commendable care with which English institutions in general have preserved their records, the desired confirmatory documents were found in various libraries and archives abroad.

Inasmuch as nothing more than brief outlines had ever been published concerning early Library development in New York, and investigation at once revealing the perpetuation of error and confusion, the writer determined to add an introductory chapter to cover, so far as possible, this neglected ground. Upon completion the monograph, together with the first three chapters of the history of the Society Library, from 1754 to 1776, under title of "The Library in Colonial New York," was approved by Professors William M. Sloane and Herbert L. Osgood as the dissertation required toward my doctorate in

<sup>1</sup> On the death of Mr. Baldwin, in February, 1908, his place was taken by Mr. Frederic de P. Foster.

philosophy in the school of Political Science in Columbia University, the thesis being by them denominated "a culture-study in American history." The Publication Committee of the Society Library having graciously offered me the use of the necessary plates, the following pages are printed as "separates" from the original volume.<sup>1</sup>

Cordial acknowledgment is therefore made of this generous action, as also of manifold individual attentions received from members of the Committee and from Mr. F. Augustus Schermerhorn, long a Trustee of both the Society Library and Columbia University. I wish further to record in hearty appreciation of courteous assistance and sympathetic interest the following names: Mr. Worthington C. Ford, formerly of the Library of Congress; Director J. Franklin Jameson, LL.D., and Miss Frances G. Davenport of the department of historical research of the Carnegie Institution, Washington; Professor Herbert L. Osgood, LL.D., Supervisor Frederic W. Erb of the Loan Division, Secretary Frederick P. Keppel and former Registrar Rudolf Tombo, Jr., Ph.D., of Columbia University; the late Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix, former Rector, the Rev. William T. Manning, D.D., Rector, Mr. Hermann H. Cammann, Comptroller, and Chief Clerk W. F. L. Aigeltinger and Mr. Charles L. Foster of the clerical staff of Trinity Parish; the Rev. Dr. Howard Duffield, Pastor, Colonel Charles H. Olmstead, Clerk of the Session, and Treasurer James Henry of the First Presbyterian Church; the Rev. Shepherd Knapp, formerly of the Brick Presbyterian Church; Messrs. John S. Bussing, Elder, and Charles S. Phillips, Clerk, of the Collegiate Dutch Church; Librarians Wilberforce Eames of the Lenox Branch of the New York Public Library, A. J. F. van Laer of the State Library at Albany, Charles K. Bolton of the Boston Athenæum, James G. Barnwell of the Library Company of Philadelphia, Richard Bliss of the Redwood Library of Newport, Ellen M. FitzSimons of the Charleston (S. C.) Library Society, Bernard C. Steiner, Ph.D., of the Enoch Pratt Free Library and Lawrence C. Wroth of the Maryland Diocesan Library, Baltimore, Mrs. Florence E. Youngs of the New York Genealogical and Biographical So-

<sup>1</sup>*History of the New York Society Library.* The DeVinne Press, New York, 1906. Charles Scribner's Sons, selling agents.

ciety, William Nelson of the New Jersey Historical Society, Dr. Samuel A. Green of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Albert C. Bates of the Connecticut Historical Society, Mabel L. Webber of the South Carolina Historical Society; the Librarians of the British Museum, the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Aberdeen and Glasgow, Lambeth and Fulham Palaces, Sion College, Dr. Bray's Associates, and the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; the Rev. Sadler Phillips, Vicar of St. Etheldreda, Fulham Palace Gates, London; the Ven. Archdeacon W. J. Armitage, Rector of St. Paul's Church, and Dr. Harry Piers, Director of the Provincial Museum, Halifax, and Canon F. W. Vroom, Librarian of King's College, Windsor, Nova Scotia; Mr. and Mrs. John Austin Stevens, Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, Mr. Samuel Verplanck Hoffman, President of the New York Historical Society, Mrs. William Henry Shankland, Miss Kate O. Petersen, the Rev. Dr. Edward T. Corwin, the Rev. Dr. Arthur Wentworth Eaton, Mr. Charles Alexander Nelson, formerly Reference Librarian of Columbia University, Mr. Philip H. Waddell Smith of Pittsburgh, Mr. Henry W. Kent of the Metropolitan Museum, Mr. Frederick W. Jenkins and Newel Perry, Ph.D., besides other personal friends.

Especial indebtedness is gratefully acknowledged to the late James H. Canfield, LL.D., Librarian of Columbia University, for reading first proofs of the entire text, in addition to kind suggestions at every stage of the work; to State Historian Victor H. Paltsits for contributions and critical comments; to the Rev. Joseph Hooper and to Librarians Frank B. Bigelow of the Society Library, Edward H. Virgin of the General Theological Seminary, and Robert H. Kelby and Assistants William A. Hildebrand and Alexander J. Wohlhagen of the New York Historical Society for continuous resourcefulness and invaluable aid; to Mr. John R. Todd, to whose photographic skill and gratuitous services the admirable character of much of the illustrative material is due; to Mr. Arthur P. Monger, London photographer, for the personal attention and excellent results that mark his reproductions of ancient manuscripts and title-pages; to Mr. John B. Pine, Clerk of the Board of Trustees of Columbia University, for his sustaining enthusiasm and material

coöperation; and to my brother, William Dickinson Keep, whose antiquarian interest and fraternal regard have made possible the great number of excerpts and data from sources in the United Kingdom.

Nor can I conclude these prefatorial words without recording in deepest appreciation and respect my lasting obligations to the gentlemen of the Faculty for their unfailing consideration and encouragement, as well as for the constant stimulus of their scholarship.

AUSTIN BAXTER KEEP

Hartley Hall, Columbia University  
April 7, 1909

## INTRODUCTION

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THE LIBRARY IN COLONIAL NEW YORK  
1698-1776



## INTRODUCTION

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### THE LIBRARY IN COLONIAL NEW YORK

1698-1776

**I**N these days of exploration into all realms of achievement and knowledge, there is no field more proper for research than that of early Library development in America. So marked have been advances in Library science within recent years, and so increasingly bright and so boundless is its prospect, that there is all the greater reason for studying the beginnings and early days of the movement. The subject is inviting and full of promise, none the less that its sources are scattered and difficult of access. But this dauntless age of inquiry demands correct and full information concerning the establishment of our oldest Libraries. With reverent curiosity it also seeks intelligence of earlier endeavors and of short-lived institutions that fell by the wayside, leaving scarce a trace to-day. It is in this spirit that the present study has been made of conditions in Colonial New York.

Present-day investigations are commonly expected to abound in revelations, to set forth an array of revolutionary statistics, to throw down and grind to powder



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the tablets of engraven belief. Only to a local and not at all damaging extent, however, will such expectation be realized in this portion of Library research. Its disclosures will occasion uneasiness to none of those commonwealths or communities that cherish landmarks along the Library way. Nothing has been discovered that can possibly ruffle their placid contentment. So far as New York is concerned, Virginia may forever point to its Indian massacre of 1622 as the fell destroyer of the earliest College Library in the new world.<sup>1</sup> Massachusetts may abide in serene satisfaction over the bequest of John Harvard's books in 1638 to the institution that bears his name as our oldest university to-day; while Boston justly glories in having had a "publike Library" in its town house before the year 1675.<sup>2</sup>

Nor is there the least disposition on the part of New York to challenge either the statement of South Carolina's historian, that "there can be little doubt that the first library in America to be supported in any degree at the public expense was that at Charlestown in 1698;"<sup>3</sup> or the equally convincing assertions of Maryland's champion, that the Bray "provincial library," sent thither in 1697, was "probably the first free circulating library in the United States,"<sup>4</sup> and that Governor Nicholson's suggestion of the same year, that the assembly make provision for its maintenance and increase, was "the first recommendation by any public official, that a part of

<sup>1</sup>The "Colledge at Henrico," founded in 1620. Horace E. Scudder. "Public Libraries a Hundred Years Ago," chap. i in *Public Libraries in the U. S.* Washington, 1876. Pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup>Charles K. Bolton in *The Influence and History of the Boston Athenæum*. Boston, 1907. P. 17.

<sup>3</sup>Edward McCrady. *The History of South Carolina under the Royal Government*. New York, 1899. P. 508.

<sup>4</sup>Bernard C. Steiner. "Rev. Thomas Bray and his American Libraries." *The American Historical Review*. New York, 1897. Vol. II, p. 73.

the public funds be applied to the support of a free public library."<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, in the chronological procession of institutions of later foundation, existing and prosperous to-day,—the Library Company of Philadelphia, dating from 1731, the Company of the Redwood Library, instituted at Newport, R. I., in 1747, and the Charles-Town (Charleston, S. C.) Library Society, established in 1748,—the New York Society Library, founded in 1754, cheerfully takes fourth place, thereby surrendering its long-asserted claim to have dated from the year 1700. This act is none the less gracious,—even though the question of precedence has never been seriously agitated by sister institutions,—for the present investigation has been conducted in the name of the Society Library, now become sponsor for the truth.

First, therefore, it may be well to quote in full the latest and supposedly the most nearly authentic account of Library beginnings in New York, that has been printed prior to the preparation of this monograph. It reads interestingly as follows, in a chapter entitled "The City under Governor John Montgomerie, 1728–1732," by the Rev. Daniel Van Pelt in the "Memorial History," published in 1892:

In September, 1728, Governor Montgomerie received word that the private library of an English clergyman, the Rev. John Millington, had been bequeathed by him to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; and that the society—something like our present church boards of foreign missions, and evidently regarding New-York as included within its range of operations among the heathen—had decided to bestow Mr. Millington's gift of books upon the corporation of our city.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

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There were a little over 1600 of them, a fair number for a private library, but rather a modest beginning for a municipal one. Naturally the prevailing character was theological or devotional, though doubtless the "Wits of Queen Anne's Time"—Pope, Addison, Steele, Swift—found a place among them. These volumes, moreover, were not the first donation of this kind: a smaller collection, also formerly the private library of a clergyman, was already in the possession of the city. This had been presented in 1700 by the Rev. John Sharp, Lord Bellomont's chaplain in the fort. As this gentleman was still living, the authorities now gave into his charge the library as thus materially increased, quarters were assigned for it in the City Hall, and here access to it was given to the public at large. Mr. Sharp, however, being an aged man, did not long survive his appointment: and after his death no one was found either able or willing to take his place. Hence the City Library fell into sad neglect, until it was transferred to the keeping of the Society Library, organized in 1754, becoming thus the nucleus of the institution that still exists and flourishes in this city to-day.<sup>1</sup>

And later in the same work, in a section devoted to the history of the Society Library, appears the following paragraph, authorized by that institution as its understanding of how the Library movement in New York originated:

The History of the New-York Society Library begins in the year 1700. At that time "The Public Library" of New-York was founded during the administration of the Earl of Bellomont (Grahame's "History of the United States," Vol. II, p. 256). The library thus organized appears to have gone on increasing, and to have acquired considerable importance. Several folio volumes—now in the possession of the Society Library—were presented by friends in London in 1712; and in 1729 the Rev. Dr. Millington, rector of Newington, England, bequeathed his

<sup>1</sup> *The Memorial History of the City of New-York*. Edited by James Grant Wilson. New York, 1892. Vol. II, p. 194. Statements in this extract form the basis of the

article on early Libraries in New York, in Ainsworth R. Spofford's *A Book for All Readers*. New York, 1900. Pp. 297-298.

library to the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts," and by this society it was presented to the Public Library of New-York. The whole collection of books was placed in charge of the corporation of the city, and seems to have suffered from want of proper attention and management until the year 1754, when an association of individuals was formed for the purpose of carrying on such an institution more efficiently. On the application of these gentlemen [the contributor here by mistake gives the names of the Trustees who secured the charter in 1772], the books they had collected were incorporated with the Public Library, and the whole placed under the care of trustees chosen by them. The institution was known at that time as "The City Library," a name by which it was popularly designated up to about the year 1750 [1850].<sup>1</sup>

Without pausing to correct or even to point out inconsistencies and inaccuracies—not to mention anachronisms<sup>2</sup>—in these two extracts, which so well and fully represent all hitherto published knowledge of the subject, a beginning will at once be made to disclose the actual facts. How errors crept in and how much was forgotten in the passage of the indifferent years, and how, in the absence of any special study, misleading reports came to be accepted as fact, will all appear in succeeding pages as old traditions and fables are explained, and in their stead is unfolded the true story of the Library in Colonial New York.

<sup>1</sup> Wentworth S. Butler. "The New-York Society Library," in chap. iii. "The Libraries of New-York." *The Memorial History*. Vol. IV, p. 106. This extract is taken bodily, with but trifling changes, from an "Historical Notice" published in the Society Library Catalogue of 1850, which also forms the basis of the article in "Public Libraries a Hun-

dred Years Ago" by Horace E. Scudder (see p. 471), as also of Mr. Van Pelt's sketch quoted above. What seems to have been a fuller and more nearly accurate account, however, in an historical address delivered by Chairman de Peyster in 1872, is not known to have been printed. Chap. IX, *infra*.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 43, 69-70.

1. *The Bray Foundation, or the Library of  
Trinity Parish, 1698-1776*

So far as known, the earliest printed mention of a Library as an institution in New York appears in an obscure and now rare little book, published at London in 1698, with one of the inordinately long titles then common, but which may briefly be called "Apostolick Charity."<sup>1</sup> It has for a preface "A General View of the English Colonies in America, with respect to Religion; In order to shew what Provision is wanting for the Propagation of Christianity in those Parts." Here, under a tabular arrangement into *Colonies, Parishes & Churches, Ministers, and Libraries*, conditions in New York are thus itemized: "1 Church in the Fort. 1 Church in the City. 2 *Dutch* Churches. 1 *French* Church. 1 Minister in the Fort. 1 Minister in the City. 2 *Dutch* Ministers. 1 *French* Minister. 1 Library." Further study reveals that credit for establishing the last-named interest belongs to the learned author himself, the Rev. Thomas Bray, D.D.

Born at Marton, Shropshire, in 1656, a graduate of All Souls' College, Oxford, a successful pastor and an able writer, Dr. Bray had been appointed by the Bishop of London in April, 1696, to act as commissary of ecclesiastical affairs in Maryland. This post he was "content to accept," if the bishops would help him provide "Parochial Libraries" for the use of the missionaries he should

<sup>1</sup> *Apostolick Charity, its Nature and Excellence Consider'd. In a Discourse upon Dan. 12. 3. Preached at St. Pauls, Decemb. 19, 1697, at the Ordination of some Protestant Missionaries to be sent into the Planta-*

*tions.* By Thomas Bray, D.D. London, 1698. The copy whose title-page is here reproduced is in the New York Public Library. An author's presentation copy is in the Library of the General Theological Seminary.

[ \* \* \* ]

	Colonies.	Parishes & Churches	Ministers	Libraries
III.	<i>New-York.</i>	1 Church in the Fort. 1 Church in the City. 2 Dutch Churches. 1 French Church.	1 Minister in the Fort. 1 Minister in the City. 2 Dutch Ministers. 1 French Minister.	1 Library.
	<i>1. Long-Island</i> <small>A populous Colony belonging to the Government of New-York, lying in the East-part, to English-Towns where are computed above 800 Families; and in the West-part 9 Dutch-Towns, wherein are upwards of 500 Families.</small>	13 Churches.	Not a Church of England Minister, tho' much desir'd in the English Part. 9 Dutch Ministers in the West-part.	
	<i>2. Albany.</i> A large City, consisting of 400 Families, bordering upon the Indians, and belonging to the Government of New York.	1 Church in the Fort for the Garrison, consisting of 2 Foot-Companies, and the English Inhabitants of the Town. 1 Dutch Church. 1 French Church. 1 Swedish Church.	1 Dutch Minister. 1 French Minister. 1 Swedish Minister.	
IV.	<i>East New Jersey</i>	In East-Jersey there are 8 Towns, no Church.	1 Minister going over	A Library begua.
V.	<i>West</i>	In this Province there are also several Towns.		
VI.	<i>Pennsylvania.</i>	1 Church at Philadelphia, having a considerable Number of Church of England Protestants.	1 Minister. 1 School-Master.	1 Library.

*Colonies.*

Second page (slightly reduced) of preface to "Apostolick Charity," published in 1698, containing first printed mention of a Library in New York. See p. 8.

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send to America, the majority of whom, he said, would be of "the poorer sort of Clergy, who could not sufficiently supply themselves with books."<sup>1</sup> The church dignitaries cordially endorsed this proposal, believing that his "Design" would, "in all likelihood, invite some of the more studious and virtuous persons out of the Universities to undertake the ministry in those parts, and be a means of rendering them useful, when they are there."<sup>2</sup> With even greater earnestness the commissary himself declared, a year and a half later:

By Experience, as well as the Reason of the Thing, I 'm convince'd, That 100 l. laid out in a LIBRARY, is what will best induce a Learned and Sober Minister to go into the Service of any part of the Church in the Plantations; And that the same is a necessary Encouragement, considering that few Men of Fortunes, who are able to purchase Books for themselves, will go into such remote Parts.<sup>3</sup>

Although for political reasons Dr. Bray did not set out for his new field until 1699,<sup>4</sup> he had been busy choosing his men and despatching sundry "book presses" overseas. The first few consignments went naturally to Maryland and neighboring provinces. But that was only the beginning of his plan. Two years before, he had issued a brochure with a similarly interminable caption, "An Essay towards promoting all Necessary and Useful Knowledge, both Divine and Human, in all the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Bray's proposal in reply to his appointment as commissary. Here copied from "Memoir of Dr. Bray" in the *Report of Dr. Bray's Associates for 1905*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> From a document in Lambeth Palace Library, signed by Archbishops Tenison and Sharpe and by Bishops Compton, Lloyd, Stillingfleet, Patrick and Moore. "Memoir of Dr. Bray," p. 32.

<sup>3</sup> *Apostolick Charity*, pp. (iv-v).

<sup>4</sup> "He took his Voyage December 16, 1699, and arriv'd in Maryland after an extream tedious and dangerous Passage, the 12th of March following"; but within the year he made a "speedy Return," without going far, if at all, beyond the Maryland border. See *Publick Spirit Illustrated* . . . (1st edition), pp. 26, 28.



Parts of His Majesty's Dominions, both at Home and Abroad."<sup>1</sup>

First in this work comes a six-page homily on Knowledge, "the fairest Ornament of the Soul of Man," which "does more distinguish the Possessors of it than Titles, Riches, or great Places: . . . whilst the Gaudy, but Empty Beau, is no other than the Scorn and Derision of all who Converse with him." Then, fearing lest his plans should seem too limited in scope, he hastens to add: "Though this Design seems more immediately directed to the Service of the Clergy, yet Gentlemen, Physicians and Lawyers will perceive they are not neglected in it." The writer next addresses "Proposals to the Gentry and Clergy of this Kingdom, for Purchasing Lending Libraries in all the Deanaries of England, and Parochial Libraries for Maryland, Virginia, and other of the Foreign Plantations." His fully matured purpose is disclosed in this quaint and touching conclusion:

In short, as meer Zeal for Publick Service hath excited me to leave no Stone unturn'd, to procure *Parochial Libraries* for the Plantations, in which I thank God I have had hitherto no mean Success; . . . Instead of *Libraries for Maryland*, the bounds of my first Design, I shall not only extend my Endeavours for the Supply of all the *English Colonies in America* therewith; but can most willing be a Missionary into every one of those Provinces, to fix and settle them therein when they are obtain'd, being so fully perswaded of the great Benefit of these kind of *Libraries*, that I should not think 'em too dear a Purchase, even at the hazard of my Life.

A complete system for founding and "preserving" Libraries is thereupon elaborated. Several pages are filled with titles of suitable books, comprising works in all

<sup>1</sup> London, 1697. A copy is in the New York Public Library.

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lines of literature, especial emphasis of course being laid on theology. In passing, it might be of interest to know how many collections sent to America owed existence to the following thrifty scheme: "That what *Gratis-Books* will be obtain'd of the Bookseller, in consideration of so many bought of 'em towards these *Lending Libraries*; that these be set apart towards making up *Parochial Libraries* for the *Foreign Plantations*."

The origin of the first New York Library, however, was clearly due to no such bonus arrangement. For upon a manuscript catalogue—about all that remains of this early collection—the price of each volume is carefully annexed, the total cost amounting to exactly £70. This list is to-day, as it has been for nearly two hundred years, in the possession of "Dr. Bray's Associates," a board of trustees organized by that good man in 1723 to found Clerical Libraries and for the education of negro slaves in the colonies. Under this heading, "A Register of y<sup>e</sup> Books Sent towards Laying y<sup>e</sup> Foundaçon of a Provincial Library in New York,"<sup>1</sup> appear 157 titles numbering 220 volumes, grouped into the following comprehensive classification:

I The H. Script: w<sup>th</sup> Commentators, 23; II Fathers, 7; III Discourses Apologetical, 9; IIII Bodies of Divinity both Catechetical & Scholastical, 14; V On y<sup>e</sup> Genl Doctrine of y<sup>e</sup> Govt of Grace, 2, and On the Creed—both y<sup>e</sup> whole Body of Cre-denda & on particular Articles, 18; VI Of Moral Laws & Xan Duties, 28; VII Of Repent: & Mortificaçon, 3; VIII Of Divine Assistance, Prayer and y<sup>e</sup> Sacram<sup>ts</sup>—those Means of perform-

<sup>1</sup> The title-page of the MS. from which this list is copied reads as follows: *Bibliotheca Provinciales Americanae, Being the Registers of Books Sent Towards Laying the Foundaçon of Five more provincial Libraries in Imitation of that of*

*Annapolis in Mary Land. For the use and Benefit of the Clergy and others in the Provinces of New England, New York, Pennsylvania, Carolina, & Bermudas. Vol. II. By Thomas Bray, D.D.*

ing the foregoing Articles, 10; IX. Sermons, 34; X Ministerial Directories, 5; XI Controversial, 19; XII Historical and Geographical,—i Humanity, viz<sup>t</sup> Ethicks & Oeconomicks, 6; ii Polity & Law, 0; iii History and its Appendages—Chronology, Geography, Voyages and Travails, 23; iiij Physiology, Anatomy, Chirurgery & Medicine, 2; v Mathematicks & Trade, 0; vi Grammars & Lexicons, 6; vii Rhetorick, 1; viii Logick, 1; ix Poetry, 3—Poetæ Antiqui, Buchananani Psalmi 12<sup>o</sup>, Miltons paradise Lost; x Miscellanies, 6.<sup>1</sup>

More than this could scarcely have been asked by the most ardent booklover of that day—from the point of view of the clergy, that is—in the way of subjects; the only remaining desideratum would be the certainty of substantial and frequent increase, an interest not as thoroughly furthered by the broad-visioned promoter, as will presently appear. Nevertheless, the arrangement just quoted deserves more than passing attention, not alone for being a good specimen of an early classification for an American library, but also for its admirable character even to-day; while the list itself comprises the standard works of the period for a clergyman's library.

That the little assortment reached its destination is proved by a fairly exact copy of the catalogue spread in full upon the old manuscript book of minutes of the vestry of Trinity parish, under the following slightly altered inscription: "A Register of the Books sent towards laying the foundation of a parochial Library in

<sup>1</sup> This scheme corresponds, with trifling exceptions, chiefly in the omission of explanatory notes, to Dr. Bray's elaborate classification in his *Bibliotheca Americana Quadrupartita; or Catalogues of the Libraries sent into the Severall Provinces belonging to the Crown of England, in order to promote all the parts of Usefull and Necessary Knowledge*

*both Divine and Humane*, a MS. work now in the Library of Sion College, London. A transcript is in the New York Public Library. Sion College is a sort of guild or corporation of the parochial clergy, rectors, vicars, lecturers and curates of the city of London proper and immediate suburbs, having been founded about the year 1625.

*A Register  
of y<sup>e</sup> Books sent towards laying  
y<sup>e</sup> foundation of a Provincial  
Library in New York*

*I The H. Script: w<sup>th</sup> Commentators.*

<i>Octavo Biblia Hebraica Graeco Latina 2 vol fol.</i>	<i>1 15 0</i>
<i>Idem Synopsis Critica 5 vol fol.</i>	<i>4 15 0</i>
<i>Parker's Annotations on y<sup>e</sup> Bible fol.</i>	<i>1 5 0</i>
<i>- On Exodus. 4<sup>to</sup></i>	<i>0 9 0</i>
<i>- On Job Psalm Psalms Lutechall's 5 vol</i>	<i>4 2 0</i>
<i>D<sup>r</sup> Hammond on y<sup>e</sup> N. Testam<sup>t</sup> fol.</i>	<i>3 4 0</i>
<i>Oxford Paraphrase on Paul's Epistles 8<sup>vo</sup></i>	<i>0 14 0</i>
<i>M<sup>r</sup> Coleridge's Medes Works fol.</i>	<i>1 3 0</i>
<i>Edwards On Difficult Texts 2 vol. 8<sup>vo</sup> with his other works</i>	<i>1 4 0</i>
<i>Lawson's Biblia Hebraica 2 vol fol</i>	<i>3 0 0</i>

First page (reduced) of catalogue of Bray books brought to New York by the Earl of Bel-  
lomot. Written in 1807; now in possession of Dr. Bray's Associates, London.

garden near the Lutheran Church-yard (by the name of Robinsons Street) And for greater Ornament that they intend to Continue the post and Rail fence in the Street fronting the Church Yard to the North side of the Lane is by them intended to be laid out. All which they prayed the Court w<sup>t</sup>d be pleased to give them Leave to do, which is by this Court accordingly granted. The said Church wardens and Committee having consented that the Lane or Alley so proposed to be left shall remain as a publick Lane or Alley forever and that the same shall be recorded as such accordingly.

By Order of the Common Council  
W<sup>m</sup>. Shepard Esq.

Catalogue of Books

A Register ~ ~ ~  
of the Books sent towards laying  
the foundation of a theological  
Library in New York for the use  
of the Ministers of Holy Trinity  
Church.

<sup>1<sup>st</sup></sup> The Holy Script: 10<sup>th</sup> Commentators.

Valab<sup>l</sup> Biblia Hebraica Graeco Latina 2 Vol fol

Polydywop<sup>h</sup> Critica 2 Vol fol

Clark's Annotations on the Bible fol

B of Eli - on Exodus p<sup>o</sup>

2 on Job, Psalm, Prov. Ecclesiastes & Vol

2 Hammond on the 11<sup>th</sup> Testament fol

Oxford's Paragraphs on St Paul's Epistles &c.

M Joseph Meade's Works fol 2 Vol

Edwards on Difficult Texts 2 Vol 8. w<sup>th</sup> his other works

Ravenhill's Bibliotheca 2 Vol fol

Benedicti Mollificand. 4<sup>o</sup>

A Concordance 10<sup>o</sup>

Copy (much reduced) of Bray catalogue in Trinity Vestry minutes, written in 1668.

## 16 THE LIBRARY IN COLONIAL NEW YORK

New York for the Use of the Ministers of Holy Trinity Church''<sup>1</sup> Though at first sight this discrepancy in phrasing might cause a shock in its suggestion of perverted funds, fortunately for the honor of the venerable and venerated parish in question, the latter style expresses precisely the intention of the founders. This is quite apparent from the set of rules accompanying the books, written as early as 1697 in the following form:

### DIRECTIONS

FFOR Y<sup>E</sup> USE, & P<sup>R</sup>ESERVATION OF Y<sup>E</sup> LIBRARY  
SENT W<sup>TH</sup> HIS EXCELLENCY THE EARL OF BELLAMONT TO  
NEW YORK IN AMERICA

Ffirst y<sup>e</sup> Cheif Design of this Library is for y<sup>e</sup> Use of y<sup>e</sup> Church of England Ministers belonging to y<sup>e</sup> Ffort, & City of New York, & for y<sup>e</sup> Chaplains of his Maj<sup>ties</sup> Ships during their Residence in y<sup>t</sup> Port.

Secondly To y<sup>e</sup> End y<sup>t</sup> any P<sup>r</sup>sons concernd may have a freer Ingress, & Regress, it is desir'd y<sup>e</sup> Books may be fixt in some publick Roome in y<sup>e</sup> Ffort, or in y<sup>e</sup> Vestry of y<sup>e</sup> Church at New York, so as shall be most Convenient for y<sup>e</sup> Clergy to come at y<sup>e</sup> Use of 'em.

Thirdly That three Registers of these Books be made, one whereof to Remain w<sup>th</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Ld B<sup>p</sup> of London, a Second w<sup>th</sup> his Excellency y<sup>e</sup> Govern<sup>r</sup>, & a Third to remain in y<sup>e</sup> Library.

Ffor y<sup>e</sup> bett<sup>r</sup> p<sup>r</sup>eservation of em it is desird y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Gentlemen of y<sup>e</sup> Vestry wou'd yearly Inspect y<sup>e</sup> Books & p<sup>r</sup>esent, as to y<sup>e</sup> Gov<sup>nr</sup>, so to y<sup>e</sup> Ld B<sup>p</sup> of London an acct wheth<sup>r</sup> they are Safe, or anywise Imbezeld or Lost.<sup>2</sup>

Richard Coote, first Earl of Bellomont, was commissioned by King William III in June, 1697, as royal governor of the provinces of New York, Massachusetts and

<sup>1</sup> Trinity vestry minutes, vol. I, p. 200 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> The original, marked "Duplicate" in pencil in a later hand, and a care-

fully written copy are to-day preserved in the collection of manuscripts left by Dr. Bray to Sion College.

New Hampshire. He landed in New York city April 2, 1698, after a tempestuous passage of seven months' duration. The voyage may well be regarded as an omen of his stormy term of office, whose brief three years were filled with bitter quarrels. His efforts to counteract the policy of his notorious predecessor, Colonel Benjamin Fletcher,—who had issued territorial grants with a lavish hand, and who was almost openly in league with piracy,—naturally aroused great hostility and left him scant opportunity to patronize an infant library. Furthermore, he soon became involved in a serious personal difference with the Rev. William Vesey, first rector of Trinity parish, so that harmony between them on any matter was wholly impossible.

In due time the governor fulfilled this part of his mission, however, for the Trinity vestry minutes bear this record for June 8, 1698: "M<sup>r</sup> Vesey having informed y<sup>e</sup> Board that [he] has rec<sup>d</sup> from his Excel<sup>t</sup> Rich: Earl of Bellomont a parcell of Books of Divinity sent over by y<sup>e</sup> right Reverend Henry Lord Bishop of London for y<sup>e</sup> Use of Trinity Church for which he hath given a receipt to his Excel<sup>t</sup> a list whereof is produced. It is *ordered* the books remain in the custody of M<sup>r</sup> Vesey untill further order and that y<sup>e</sup> Clerk do register the Catalogue of the books in the vestry book."<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, what may have been the nucleus of a Library had already been formed in a gift from the retiring executive, Colonel Fletcher, who had shown his good will to Trinity by signing its original charter, May 6, 1697, and in the granting of an extensive land lease to the parish. For, at a vestry meeting held March 26,

<sup>1</sup> Trinity vestry minutes, I, 25-26. follow at once, beginning on page 200.  
The "Catalogue," however, does not

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1698, "Mr David Jamison reports that his Excel<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Gov<sup>r</sup> has given a Bible & some other books to this Corporation for y<sup>e</sup> use of Trinity Church w<sup>ch</sup> are Suppos'd to be in y<sup>e</sup> hands of M<sup>r</sup> Symon Smith. *Ordered* Capt Wilson & W<sup>m</sup> Sharpas do waite upon M<sup>r</sup> Smith & aske for y<sup>e</sup> Same."<sup>1</sup>

From the beginning, the vestrymen of Trinity Church have uniformly been influential citizens, and these early members certainly present no exception. David Jameson held successively the offices of deputy secretary of the province, clerk of the assembly and city recorder; Captain Ebenezer Willson, for years city treasurer, had been a common councilman and later occupied the mayoralty from 1707 to 1710; while William Sharpas, confirmed as town clerk in the Dongan charter in 1686, held that important post until his death in 1739. Lastly, the Rev. Simon Smith was chaplain of the forces in the fort from 1696 to 1700, the chapel having been ordered rebuilt by Governor Fletcher in the year 1695.<sup>2</sup>

The first Trinity Church, which stood on the present site on land formerly a portion of the old Dutch West India Company's garden, had been opened for public worship in March, 1698. That the books were housed in this edifice, doubtless from their receipt, is plain from a letter of Mr. Vesey's to Governor Nicholson of Virginia,

<sup>1</sup> Trinity vestry minutes, I, 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> Of this event the Rev. John Miller, chaplain, 1692-1695, writes: "The Chappell was first built about the year 1630 but growing ruinous it was pull'd Down Ano 1694 & rebuilt in y<sup>e</sup> years of X 1695 & 1696." From a note in his own hand on the fly-leaf of a great Bible, now in the N. Y. Public Library, and of which he says: "This Bible belonged to the Chappell in the Kings fort at New York & fell to my Lot upon

Gov<sup>r</sup> Fletchers carrying over another for that use & purpose in y<sup>e</sup> year 1692." The chapel was destroyed early in 1741 in "the late fatal fire that laid in ashes the house, chaple, barracks & Secretary's office in his Majesty's fort in this Town." Speech of Lt.-Gov. George Clarke to the Council, April 15, 1741. *Journal of the Legislative Council, 1691-1745*. Albany, 1861. P. 769.



dated June 9, 1702, in which he tells how, at the suggestion of "his Reverence D<sup>r</sup> Bray," a "happy Society" of the several ministers of the city was "maintained in the Church Library."<sup>1</sup>

Other lists, also preserved in the archives of the Bray Associates, show that additions were made from time to time to the original collection. For example, under "A Catalogue of Books Sent Aug<sup>t</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> 1701 to New York to Improve the Library at New York," appear some twenty titles covering twenty-four volumes of sermons and religious treatises, the cost of each book being entered as before. Again, as few as eight volumes, similarly devotional in character, were accompanied with "A Catalogue of the Books Sent Ap<sup>l</sup> 23, 1702 to Aug<sup>mt</sup> the Library at New York."

Both these accessions are found copied in the Trinity vestry minutes<sup>2</sup> directly following the first "Register." A supplementary reference to the subject appears in the proceedings of June 2, 1701, when "The Vestrey Examined the Churches Library according to the Catalogue Sent from D<sup>r</sup> Bray & Signed the same returned with an Acco<sup>t</sup> of what books were wanting & w<sup>t</sup> were not in the Catalogue."<sup>3</sup>

The next consignment, comprising six volumes, is styled in the church records "A Catalogue of Books Sent to the Library Anno 1704." Subsequent donations, however, seem to have come from private sources, full credit for the gifts being expressed. The first of such presents,

<sup>1</sup> *S. P. G. Letter Book* (copies), no. 112, 1702-1799. The archives of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts have been for years at no. 19 Delahay st., Westminster, London. A later copy by Dr. Hawks is in the Gen. Conv.

Archives, N. Y. MSS., I, 14-15. These Hawks papers are kept in the Church Missions House, 4th ave. and 22d st., N. Y. city.

<sup>2</sup> Vestry minutes, I, 208 *et seq.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 38.

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a collection of twelve doctrinal works, is entered under "A Catalogue of Books given to the Library of New York by Tho<sup>s</sup> Byerly Esq<sup>r</sup> Colector and Receiver General of the province of New York of the Value of five pounds Sterling 1704 & brought from London by M<sup>r</sup> Brett 1705." Immediately after this, acknowledgment is made of some books "At the Same time Sent by the Bishop of London," including prayer books and "22 Serious Exortations to the practice of Religious Duties both publick and private. Sent to be Distributed among the poor by the Minister."

Following this doubtless most comforting benefaction comes an entry well calculated to awaken antiquarian attention. Thus reads the record: "Janry 1712 Given the Right Hon<sup>ble</sup> the Earle of Clarendons y<sup>e</sup> History of the Rebellion & Civil Wares in 3 Vol. fol."<sup>1</sup> And interest centers in the announcement because the second volume of this very set may be seen to-day in the New York Society Library. Natural sentiment attaching to this venerable book, a pathetic survivor of New York's first Library, is heightened by an ornate label on its front cover, bearing in gilt letters still bright the clear-cut legend, BELONGING TO Y<sup>e</sup> LIBRARY OF NEW YORK IN AMERICA 1711.

Certainly here was offered an agreeable contrast to the dull monotony of theological lore. Though the kindly donor's name is not known, he may reasonably be

<sup>1</sup> Edward Earl of Clarendon. *The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England*. Oxford, 1703. This was not the only copy in the early Library, for the Trinity vestry minutes show that in January, 1709, Lord Cornbury, then removed from the governorship and confined in the debtors' prison, on the top

floor of the City Hall, "had presented . . . the Library with the Lord Clarendons first part of the History of the Civil Warrs of the Kingdome of England." Vol. I, p. 63. This gift had quite a personal touch, for Lord Cornbury—as was also Queen Anne—was a grandchild of the author.

presumed to have been either Dr. Bray or the Bishop of London again, for this gilt lettering conforms exactly with that on the books brought by Lord Bellomont in 1698 for Boston, as the nucleus of its parochial library.<sup>1</sup> This collection, known as King's Chapel Library, has long been deposited in the Boston Athenæum. It comprises some 110 volumes, with the royal stamp, SVB AVSPICIIS WILHELMII III, on one cover, and on the other, DE BIBLIOTHECA DE BOSTON. A few of the books, however, are labeled like the old Clarendon history, BELONGING TO Y<sup>E</sup> LIBRARY OF BOSTON IN NEW ENGLAND, though no date is affixed, that feature evidently having come as an improvement in course of time. Moreover, Dr. Bray had expressly directed:

*THAT for further Security to preserve them from Loss and Imbezement, and that they may be known where-ever they are found; in every Book, on the one side of the Cover, shall be Letter'd these Words, SUB AVSPICIIS WILLIELMI III. on the other side the Name of the Parish to which these Books do belong: EX. GR. E. BIBLIOTHECA DE MARY-TOWN: E. BIBLIOTHECA DE JAMES-TOWN, &c.*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Receipt of these books was acknowledged in a letter to the Lord Bishop of London under date of July 25, 1698, as appears from a copy in the vestry minutes of King's Chapel, Boston. Its records also contain a catalogue of the books, classified much like those for New York, and styled, "A Register of Books Sent with his Excellency the Earl of Bellomont towards laying the foundation of a Library for the use of the Church of England Clergy in Boston." The list is given in full, to the number of 211 volumes, by the Rev. Henry W. Foote in the "Proceedings" of the Mass. Hist. Soc. for May, 1881, 1st series, vol. XVIII. Boston, 1881. Pages 426-430. The original "Register" pre-

cedes that of the slightly larger New York consignment in the MS. brochure, *Bibliotheca Provinciales Americanae* (see p. 12n), bound into a nameless, leather-covered volume now in the keeping of the Bray Associates. Each volume of the old collection now in the Boston Athenæum also bears on its inside cover this stamp, "BELONGING TO KING'S CHAPEL LIBRARY, BOSTON." A rebound folio with this same label is in the Library of the General Theological Seminary, New York. It is "The Book of Common Prayer," published in London in 1739, so that it was of course a later contribution.

<sup>2</sup> "Proposals for the Encouragement and Promoting of Religion

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We may therefore easily imagine how the earlier volumes of New York's first Library were probably stamped. But of that little collection the Clarendon book alone survives to-day in its solitary isolation in the Society Library. How and when it came there can only be conjectured, as will be seen.<sup>1</sup>

It is thus perfectly patent that the first Library in New York was wholly parochial in scope. But from its being intended for the use of the clergy in general, it assumed a more public character. And that it was even so styled is evident from one source at least. For, at a Trinity vestry meeting, June 13, 1707, "the Reverend Mr Vesey inform'd this Board Tho: Byerly Esq<sup>r</sup> had presented the public Library with Books amounting to Six pounds which are put down in the Catalogue thereof,"<sup>2</sup> as related above.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, in 1700, Dr. Bray had widened his Library plan to include among its beneficiaries the laity, for whom were to be provided "Lending Laymen's Libraries." He had previously written, that "in the Chief Town in each Province it would be requisite to have a Library of more Universal Learning, for the Service and Encouragement of those who shall launch out farther in the pursuit of Useful Knowledge, as well

and Learning in the Foreign Plantations." P. 124, Part I, of *Bibliotheca Parochialis*. London, 1697. Reprinted in "Rev. Thomas Bray. His Life and Selected Works Relating to Maryland." Edited by Bernard C. Steiner. Pp. 204-205. *Vide infra*, p. 27n1.

<sup>1</sup> Since this matter was set up in type, there has come to light in the Library of the General Theological Seminary a single folio volume, its respective covers stamped, in similar gilt characters, SVB AVSPICIIS

WILHELMII III, and DE BIBLIOTHECA DE NEW YORK. Furthermore, the title, "Epiphani Opera 2 Vol. Colon. 1682,"—entered under the heading, "Fathers," in the original "Register" of 1697, as in its copy in the Trinity vestry minutes,—identifies this book, the second volume of the work, as part of the original consignment brought over by Lord Bellomont.

<sup>2</sup> Trinity vestry minutes, I, 58.

<sup>3</sup> *Supra*, p. 20.

Natural as Divine."<sup>1</sup> Accordingly he now arranged to despatch books "to be Lent or Given at the Discretion of the Minister," the clergy being "the Persons whose Chief Business it is to be Men of Knowledge."<sup>2</sup> In one of his "Circular Letters" to the clergy of Maryland in 1701, this enthusiastic man speaks of the Layman's Library as "my darling Contrivance." Among recipients of its benefits are included "y<sup>e</sup> Chief Governors," "y<sup>e</sup> Best Disposed Magistrates," and "y<sup>e</sup> publick Houses."

To expedite this measure Dr. Bray proposed the appointment of a special agent in America, with the following towns as distributing centers or "chief stations": Boston; New York, "from whence he may go to Long Island & East Jersey"; Philadelphia; "Annapolis in Mary Land"; and Williamsburg, Virginia.<sup>3</sup> The Rev. George Keith, a clergyman of renowned fervor, was chosen to conduct the new enterprise. Both his selection and the character of the matter to be distributed show clearly that the missionary idea was even more pronounced than before. Mr. Keith, himself a rabid convert from Quakerism, was to be supplied with books and tracts of an exclusively religious tone,—without a gleam of worldliness to lighten their pervading solemnity,—under the following heads: the Scriptures; works "for y<sup>e</sup> Instruction of Catechumens"; others "for y<sup>e</sup> use of y<sup>e</sup> Adults"; still others "to promote . . . a Reformation of Manners"; writings "to prepare y<sup>e</sup> Adults for y<sup>e</sup> Worthy Receiving of both y<sup>e</sup> Sacram<sup>ts</sup>"; and, lastly, works aimed "to Recover to y<sup>e</sup> Unity of the Church all such as have Gone astray into Heresy and Schism," such wanderers being classified as Quakers, Dissenters and Papists.

<sup>1</sup> *Apostolick Charity*, p. (v).

<sup>2</sup> From the preface to *Bibliotheca*

*Americanae Quadripartita*. See p. 13n.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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George Keith set sail in April, 1702, and remained in the colonies for a little over two years, as the first missionary sent by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts on a tour of personal investigation. Concerning the condition of the Anglican church in New York, he thus expresses himself upon arrival:

The Church of England under the late Administration of the Lord Bellamont and Captain Nanfan hath been grievously opposed and oppressed; but since the auspicious arrival of the Right Honorable the Lord Cornbury, has been delivered from the violence of her enemies, restored to her rights, greatly countenanced and encouraged, and lives under the just expectation of being more firmly established and enlarged.<sup>1</sup>

Lists of books and tracts sent over to America for this work among laymen are preserved to-day with the Bray papers in the Library of Sion College, London. One of them is styled "An Acc<sup>t</sup> of the Books Set up in y<sup>e</sup> Bookpress Sent to N. York." It is not dated, but that the books were received appears in a letter from Mr. Keith to Dr. Bray, dated at Philadelphia, February 24, 1704, as follows: "The six boxes you sent are all come safe; that to Boston, that to New York, that to the two Jerseys, and that to Pennsylvania, are all disposed of already, according to your orders, and are very acceptable to the people."<sup>2</sup> The majority of the books were not only deeply religious in character but excessively contro-

<sup>1</sup> *Collections of the Protestant Episcopal Historical Society*. New York, 1831. Page xix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxiv. Also quoted by the Rev. Joseph Hooper in his pamphlet "George Keith," in *Soldier & Servant Series*, Hartford, 1894. P. 15. That this work was maintained is clear from a memorandum in the

Rev. John Sharpe's diary: "A Catalogue of Books given by the Society for propagation of the Gospel to His Ex<sup>ty</sup> Coll Hunter which are now given to be distributed." It includes 15 titles of tracts, numbering in all 530 volumes. (Governor Hunter arrived at New York in June, 1710.)

versial as well, comprising many copies of the Rev. Charles Leslie's "Y<sup>e</sup> Snake in y<sup>e</sup> Grass"—that reptile being understood to mean Quakerism—and of Bugg's "Pilgrim's Progress from Quakerism to Christianity."

SVB  
AVSPICIIS  
WILHELMI  
II  
DE  
BIBLIOTHECA  
DE  
NEW YORK

Gilt letters (facsimile size) stamped on covers of surviving volume of first consignment of Bray books to New York, 1697. See pp. 21, 22*n*1.

Evidently Mr. Keith had been directed also to look into the condition of the several Parochial Libraries, for in a long letter to Dr. Bray from Philadelphia in the spring of 1703 he writes, in part: "I view'd the Library att Boston, as ye ordered me, and find it in good Condition. But at N. York I could not have the Catalogue.

Mr. Vesey the Minister told me the Chaplain of the fort had carried it away with him to England." There is nothing in the records to indicate who this offending person was. The Rev. Edmond Mott held the chaplaincy for the two years preceding his death in 1704.<sup>1</sup> According to the rather confusing table of chaplains in the appendix to the recently published history of Trinity parish,<sup>2</sup> his immediate predecessor was the Rev. John Peter Brisac, who in 1701 succeeded the Rev. Simon Smith, incumbent from 1696 to 1700. This last-named individual, it will be recalled, was for a time the unofficial custodian of the first books given by Governor Fletcher in 1698. He is mentioned in the vestry minutes of September 23, 1700, as "suspended,"<sup>3</sup> so he may as well bear the further odium of having absconded with the Library catalogue.

It must long since have become apparent that Dr. Bray was a man of unusual creative power. He should be accounted one of the ablest organizers in the colonial period of American history, for his efforts led to the establishment of the celebrated "Venerable" Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, chartered June 20, 1701, and of the still older Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge—both institutions wielding great influence. To the former New York is especially indebted for its instrumentality in establish-

<sup>1</sup> Possibly this person's private library was joined with the parish collection, for Governor Cornbury wrote to the Lords of Trade, Oct. 3, 1706, that Mr. Mott, "late Chaplain to Her Majesty's forces here, . . . has left some books of which I herewith send a Catalogue." *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, vol. IV, p. 1182.

<sup>2</sup> Morgan Dix. *A History of the Parish of Trinity Church. New*

York. 1898. Vol. I, appendix ix, p. 485.

<sup>3</sup> Trinity vestry minutes, I, 36. Also, Lord Bellomont wrote to the Lords of Trade, Oct. 17, 1700: "I suspended Parson Smith, Chaplain to these Companys, on the 7th of last August for affronting my Lord Bishop of London and for living a scandalous life." *Col. Docs.*, IV, 719.



ing, among similar institutions in America, the first Public Circulating Library (the Corporation Library) and the first College Library (the Library of King's College) in the metropolis, the history of both of which will presently be reviewed. The study of Dr. Bray's life and work is profitable, so interesting and useful was his career, and so abiding have been many fruits of his labors and sacrifices.<sup>1</sup>

In 1746 there was published an appreciative volume entitled "Publick Spirit Illustrated in the Life and Designs of the Reverend Thomas Bray, D.D." An appendix to its second edition (1808) gives this summary of his chief work: "By the exactest account that has been procured, upwards of Fifty Libraries, it appears, were founded by Dr. Bray in America and other countries abroad, and Sixty-One Parochial Libraries in England and Wales." A schedule is added, according to which four collections had been sent "into the Government of New York," namely: to the city of New York, 211; "to Amboy in New Jersey," 30; to Albany, 10;<sup>2</sup> and "to

<sup>1</sup> For sources, see Dr. Bernard C. Steiner's article, "Rev. Thomas Bray and his American Libraries," in *The American Historical Review*. New York, 1897. Vol. II, p. 59 *et seq.*; "Parochial Libraries in the Colonial Period," by Bishop John F. Hurst, D.D., in *Papers of the American Society of Church History*. New York, 1890. Vol. II, pp. 37-50; and, especially, "Rev. Thomas Bray. His Life and Selected Works Relating to Maryland." Edited by B. C. Steiner. *Maryland Historical Society Fund Publication, No. 37*. Baltimore, 1901. This collection of reprints contains also "A Short Historical Account of the Life and Designs of Thomas Bray, D.D., late Vicar of St Botolph's without Aldgate," by the Rev. Richard Rawlinson. This sketch, a MS. in the

Bodleian Library, Oxford, was made the basis of *Publick Spirit Illustrated in the Life and Designs of the Reverend Thomas Bray, D.D.* London, 1746. A copy is in the General Seminary Library. A copy of the second edition (1808) is in the New York Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> In the year 1900, one of these ten books, sent early in the 18th century to "The Church of Albany in New York" by Dr. Bray's Associates, was "again in the custody of the parish" of Old St. Peter's. It was a copy of Dr. Bray's own work, *Catechetical Lectures*. London, 1701. See *A History of Saint Peter's Church in the City of Albany*. By the Rev. Joseph Hooper, A.M. Albany, 1900. P. 34a. But in November, 1907, diligent search failed to find the book.

Boston in New England," 221; the figures representing the number of books despatched to each place.

Nevertheless, beyond the few and insignificant accessions already enumerated, the New York collection remained practically dormant. Fully a quarter of a century after its foundation, Rector Vesey, in response to a printed request from the Bishop of London, thus briefly exposes its undeveloped state: "I have under my care in my Study a small parochial library, and though I never received any particular rules and orders concerning it, I assure your Lordship all the books are preserved and kept in good condition."<sup>1</sup> The good rector was evidently quite unmindful of the "Directions" that accompanied the consignment in the first instance. Very properly the church continued to be the repository, and its pastor the custodian, of the little collection. Of its careful preservation indeed, the Rev. Robert Jenney, chaplain at the fort and assistant minister at Trinity, writes suggestively to the Bishop of London in November, 1720, when asking aid to establish the Sharpe collection as a Public Library: ". . . provided it be really a publick library & be not lockt up in y<sup>e</sup> particular Study of any particular person."

It thus appears that some thought at least was paid to the colonial Library, although but slender additions had gained their way to its shelves. The energetic founder himself would seem to have had no system of enlarging the several collections he had brought into being, until

<sup>1</sup>His reply to the last of 17 *Queries to be answered by every Minister*, viz: "Have you a Parochial Library? If you have, are the Books preserved, and kept in good condition? Have you any particular rules and orders for the preserving of them? Are those rules and

orders duly observed?" The original of this paper cannot now be found among the MSS. in Fulham Palace, London. A copy is pasted in Gen. Conv. Arch., *N. Y. MSS.*, I, 640, undated, but similar papers from other parishes in the province are dated 1723 or 1724.

his formation of the Bray Associates, the income from whose charity fund has, since his decease in 1730, established and perpetuated hundreds of Theological Libraries in Great Britain and in her dominions beyond the seas. But the New York Library, with others in what is now the United States, received no further support from home.

Nor did they, on the other hand, meet with much encouragement from the colonists. The Library idea was too advanced for them, especially in New York, where confusion of tongues still prevailed, and where the Anglican element was too unpopular to secure aid for a purely sectarian institution. And the predominant character of the Bray collections was so exclusively devotional and churchly as not to be generally acceptable. It was thus never possible to establish or confirm this early Library by legislative enactment, as its pious founder earnestly desired, and as was done in other provinces.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the Knickerbockers were too deeply engrossed in their private and political concerns for even the well-to-do to be men of leisure. All alike were engaged in business, while for recreation they not unnaturally preferred out-of-door pastimes to excursions in theology. When Governor Bellomont first set foot on the island of Manhattan, echoes of the distracting Leisler excitement, the reflection in New York of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, had by no means died away in the little city, whose settled portion lay wholly below Wall street, and whose inhabitants numbered less than five thousand souls.

From the following lines in an old history one gains

<sup>1</sup> See *Colonial Laws of Maryland*, 1704, 1706, 1712; of *North Carolina*, 1699, 1727; of *South Carolina*, 1700, 1715.

an interesting picture of the cultural conditions of those times,—discrediting the while its concluding assertion, especially in view of the facts to be brought out in the present work. Listen, then, to the learned Britisher, James Grahame, how he writes:

A printing-press was established at New York, in the year 1693, by a printer flying from the strange occurrence of Quaker tyranny and persecution in Pennsylvania; and a library was founded under the government of Lord Bellamont in the year 1700. But the schools in this province were inconsiderable; and although the wealthier families obtained valuable instructors for their children among the numerous Protestant refugees from France, the great bulk of the people were strangers even to the first rudiments of science and cultivation, till the era of the American Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

On this allusion to a Library has been based the hitherto uncontroverted claim that "The history of the New York Society Library commences in the year 1700," at which "time 'The Public Library' of New York was founded during the administration of the Earl of Bellamont."<sup>2</sup> Not a little of the glamour attaching to this long-vaunted, cherished belief is therefore dispelled in a realization that the collection was originally but a paltry "parcell" of sober tomes for a Parish Library. Knowledge of the fact, however, will in turn soothe any sting of disappointment at learning that this early Library never had the slightest connection with the Society Library, founded confessedly in 1754. The two institutions maintained independent existences for twenty-two years, side by side in the little capital, the one in Trinity

<sup>1</sup> James Grahame. *The History of the United States*. (London, 1827, 1836.) Boston and Philadelphia, 1845. Vol. II, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> *The New York Society Library*.

*History, Charter, By-Laws, &c.* 1881. P. 5; also, *Catalogue of the New York Society Library*. 1850. P. vii. See also p. 6, *supra*.

Church and the other in the City Hall,<sup>1</sup> until the moribund career of the former and the first epoch in the history of the latter came to a simultaneous end under the ravages of the Revolution.

An even earlier mention of the older Library is found in another historical work, published almost contemporaneously with the event chronicled, and bearing the ambitious title, "The British Empire in America, Containing the History of the Discovery, Settlement, Progress and present State of all the British Colonies, on the Continent and Islands of America."<sup>2</sup> In the chapter on New York it is stated as proof of advancement that "A Library was erected, this Year [1700], in the City of New-York: And the Dutch Inhabitants built Mills to saw Timber; one of which wou'd do more in an Hour, than 50 Men in 2 Days."<sup>3</sup>

The very arrangement of these informing particulars points with unconscious emphasis to the relative insignificance of a Library in comparison with the general interests of the community at that time. There is no evidence at hand to show that the Dutch ever had so much as thought of a Church Library in New York;<sup>4</sup> while the only reference to books that can be found in their public acts appears in an ordinance of 1662 by the director-general and council of New Netherland against

<sup>1</sup> The City Hall then stood in Wall street opposite Broad, scarcely a stone's throw from Trinity Church, on Broadway facing Wall street.

<sup>2</sup> John Oldmixon. London, 1708.

<sup>3</sup> Vol. I, p. 128.

<sup>4</sup> In the "Rensselaerswyck MSS." there is recorded a "Catalogue of Books which are sent for the Library in Rensselaerswyck, to be forwarded there." This list comprises 17 titles of theological works by

scholars of well-nigh as many nationalities, English, French, German, Latin, Italian and Spanish, as well as Dutch. The little collection was despatched from Holland in the same vessel that bore the Rev. Johannes Megapolensis to his new field in the colony of Rensselaerswyck. For a list of the books with "remarks," see E. B. O'Callaghan. *History of New Netherland*. New York, 1846. Vol. I, pp. 454-455.

conventicles, whereby "diuerse persons" were prohibited from importing or dispersing "seditious & erroneous boecks, writings & letters."<sup>1</sup> Yet by 1664 there were schools in nearly all the towns and villages of New Netherland, with a Latin or high school of wide repute at New Amsterdam. And certainly the ministers, as also other leading citizens, were the possessors of private collections. Even as elegant a personage as Governor Francis Lovelace is said to have written to King Charles in 1668: "I find some of these people have the breeding of courts, and I cannot conceive how such is acquired."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, as one careful student of that period has observed, "the spirit of trade, and those depressing influences common to all colonies and young countries, checked if not stifled literary enterprise."<sup>3</sup>

It is even less probable that other religious bodies in the city had Libraries. The Presbyterians, in point of influence the third denomination, met with too much opposition and discouragement simply in maintaining an establishment in New York to think of conducting a Library. It is therefore not surprising to find in their records no suggestion of such an institution. One significant entry, however, betokens their proper appreciation of the value of books. The trustees of the church on June 1, 1756, took the following action:

*Resolved* That the Rev<sup>d</sup> Mr Bostwick may become a subscriber to the New York Society Library. That the Clerk draw an Or-

<sup>1</sup> *Laws and Ordinances of New Netherland, 1638-1674*. Edited by E. B. O'Callaghan. Albany, 1866. P. 428.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Ashbel G. Vermilye, D.D. "Francis Lovelace and the Recapture of New Netherland, 1668-1674." *The Memorial History of New-York*. Vol. I, chap. ix, p.

349. It must be said, however, that no source is given for this quotation, which does not appear in the governor's correspondence printed in the *N. Y. Col. Docs.* or in the *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.*

<sup>3</sup> E. B. O'Callaghan. *History of New Netherland*. New York, 1848. Vol. II, p. 547.

der in his Favour on the Treasurer for such sum as the Subscription money may amount to And it is to be understood that this Interest in the Library is given to M<sup>r</sup> Bostwick as Minister of this Church, & that at his Decese his Heir Excecutor or Administrator or Legatee or himself in Case he shall cease to be our Minister in his Life time will assign his Interest in the said Library to such Person as the Majority of the Trustees shall direct and that he will in the mean Time pay the annual Subscription money due by the Articles.<sup>1</sup>

The subsequent history of the old Trinity Parish Library—as it should properly be called—is also of interest, culminating in truly dramatic fashion. All its later acquisitions, so far as the vestry proceedings reveal, seem to have been presented by the same individual, “the pious M<sup>r</sup> Elliston,” a personage of no little consequence, to judge by the deferential manner in which his name and station, as well as votes of appreciation, are entered in the ancient minutes. Beginning in 1715 these donations, together with sundry offerings of choice plate, were continued intermittently for many years, the last “Additionall Number of Books to the Parochial Library” being recorded in July, 1741.

All told, these benefactions number some 116 volumes, covering six pages of the “Catalogue” in the big manuscript folio,<sup>2</sup> and thus introduced: “Robert Elliston Gent. Comptrol<sup>r</sup> of his Majesty’s Customs in New York in America. His Gift of the Books by the Reverend Authors in the Catalogue ffollowing; To Holy Trinity Church in New York City Its Library.” The titles are tabulated under these headings: “The Reverend Authors Named,” “Their Respective Tracts Distinguished,” and

<sup>1</sup> The Rev. David Bostwick died in November, 1763; his share, according to the Society Library records,

was transferred in 1766 to Henry Remsen, Jr., who paid the arrears.

<sup>2</sup> Trinity vestry minutes, I, 210-212; 218-220.

217  
late request

at the same time sent by the Bishop of London—  
12 London prayer books 12.  
22 serious exhortations to the practice of Religious  
Duties both publick and private sent to the Irish butts  
Among the poor and his Honor's Minister.

Jan'y 1712 Given the Right Honble the  
Earl of Blarindon by the Ministry of the Robellion &  
Civil Wars in 36l. fol.

Jan'y 1715 Given by the poor Mr. Martin  
two volumes of Dr. Willelmus Doan of Bangor  
vol. are inserted in the Catalogue of books by him given  
to the Library Aug. 24 1736.

Robert Wiston Gent. Comptrolr.  
of his Majesty's Customs in New York in  
America.

His Gift  
of the Books by the Reverend Authors in the Catalogue  
following  
To Holy Trinity Church in New York City  
the Library.

The Anonymous Authors named	Those Respectively Distinguished	The Number of Volumes Lent
M <sup>r</sup> Shuckrope's book of prayer	New History of the Church 1711	fol.
The Anonymous of the bridge University	Confession of the Church of England	1. fol.
The late Bishop of Exeter	On the Duty of the Christian in the Church of England	1. fol.
The late Bishop of Exeter	On the Duty of the Christian in the Church of England	1. 26
The late Bishop of Exeter	On the Duty of the Christian in the Church of England	1. 26

Full page (much reduced) from catalogue in Trinity Vestry minutes. See pp. 29, 33-35.



"The Number of Volumes Lettered." An artistic finish is intended in a valedictory, handsomely written in Latin, expressive of the donor's hope that the gift may prove useful; but the passage is so incomplete, not to say inaccurate, that it will not bear close scrutiny from intelligent readers. The whole is dated, churchly fashion, at the Feast of the Epiphany, January, 1743.

No further allusion to this Library, either in the church records or anywhere else, has come to light in the present investigation, prior to the sad chronicling of its virtually complete destruction in the great fire of September 21, 1776, when the charity schools and the rectory, as well as the sacred edifice itself, fell prey to the destroyer. The least item in the damage, the loss of the Library, was yet estimated as £200,<sup>1</sup> a very considerable sum for those days, even though a pound represented but about \$2.50 in New York currency. It would seem that the collection must have received additions other than the catalogue in the minutes records, for not over 425 volumes are there enumerated, and not all of these were lost.

A graphic account of this fire is given by Rector Inglis, who labored heroically to save the church property from destruction.<sup>2</sup> In some way a few of the books escaped annihilation. Besides the old Clarendon history in the Society Library, already mentioned, about twenty Elliston volumes are in existence to-day in the Library of the General Theological Seminary. Most of them are still adorned with his beautiful bookplate and the printed label, "His Gift to H. Trinity-Church Library

<sup>1</sup> Vestry minutes, I, 398.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Charles Inglis, D.D., to the Rev. Richard Hind, D.D., Oct. 31, 1776. Copy in S. P. G. records and in Gen. Conv. Arch., N. Y. MSS; it is printed in *Doc. Hist. of N. Y.* Vol. III (1850), pp. 637-646.

in New-York City." In company with them is yet another interesting little book,<sup>1</sup> its fly-leaf bearing this significant inscription, "John Sharp May 6<sup>th</sup> 1714,"—of which more anon.

There is real romance in the story of what next befell this fire-spared remnant. In the words of Nathaniel F. Moore, president of Columbia College, when referring to the transfer of the Library and other effects of King's College to the City Hall in May, 1776:

Almost all the apparatus, and a large proportion of the books belonging to the College, were wholly lost to it in consequence of this removal; and of the books recovered, six or seven hundred volumes were so, only after about thirty years, when they were found, with as many belonging to the N. Y. Society Library, and some belonging to Trinity Church, in a room in St. Paul's Chapel, where, it seemed, no one but the Sexton had been aware of their existence, and neither he nor any body else could tell how they had arrived there.<sup>2</sup>

In consequence of this statement, the belief very naturally came to prevail that the books were in some way wholly hidden from the view and from the actual knowledge of all the church officers. In fact it has been solemnly assumed that the doorway to their place of repository was carefully walled up for their preservation!<sup>3</sup> But from press comments at the time the miscellaneous assortment was "discovered," it appears that even then the story—though not the collection—was pronounced

<sup>1</sup> *Warnings of the Eternal Spirit*, . . . London, 1712. Another work, *The Lawfulness and Expediency of Set Forms of Prayer, Maintained* (Robert Calder. N. p., 1706), bearing the same autograph and date, was presented to the Seminary in 1890, by the late Rev. Dr. Alfred

B. Beach, rector of St. Peter's Church.

<sup>2</sup> N. F. Moore. *An Historical Sketch of Columbia College*. New York, 1846. P. 62.

<sup>3</sup> Morgan Dix, S.T.D. *Historical Recollections of St. Paul's Chapel*. New York, 1867. P. 43.

an invention, "a hoax"! Upon investigation, the editor of the *Morning Chronicle* on December 14, 1802, gave the following explanation of current lively rumors:

There are in a room in the east corner of St. Paul's church, about two thousand volumes consisting chiefly of latin and English authors. They are the remains of a library presented by different persons to Trinity church, many years since, which were saved from the flames when that edifice was consumed, and were lodged in the hands of bishop Inglis. On his removal to Nova-Scotia (at the evacuation of this city by the British forces) they were conveyed from his house to St. Paul's church, where they have ever since remained. They were not forgotten, as reported, but have been visited frequently by bishop Provoost and others.

It would seem that "others" did indeed know of their existence prior to this date, for exactly a year previously Mr. John Pintard, one of the most public-spirited men of his day, had written in his diary:<sup>2</sup> "Conversed with Bishop Moore on forming a Theological Library under the auspices of Trinity Church." Enough of a stir, however, was occasioned by the newspaper disclosures for the college authorities to claim the neglected remnant of the King's College Library.<sup>3</sup> And friends of the Society Library no doubt as promptly recovered such of its property as could be identified, though the minutes of its Trustees do not mention the circumstance at all, in their brief chronicles of the few meetings held at that period.

Nearly twelve years passed before any further attention was paid to the old volumes still left in St. Paul's.

<sup>1</sup> The *Morning Chronicle*, N. Y., Dec. 13, 1802.

<sup>2</sup> These valuable MS. records are widely scattered. The sections referred to in the present volume are

in the possession of Mrs. E. B. Ser-voss, N. Y. city.

<sup>3</sup> At least one volume, however, was left behind and is now in the Library of the General Theological Seminary. See p. 99n2.



*Robert Elliston Gent. Comptrollr.  
of his Majesty's Customs of  
New York in America.*

**HIS GIFT TO H. TRINITY-CHURCH LIBRARY  
IN  
NEW-YORK CITY.**

*Det Bine*

*A. 24/2.*

*[Signature]*

Robert Elliston bookplate (facsimile size), printed label and  
private inscription. See pp. 33, 34, 33-34.

Finally, at a Trinity vestry meeting on March 14, 1814, a letter was read from the Rev. Nathaniel Bowen, rector of Grace Church, "and others, a Committee in behalf of the New York Protestant Episcopal Library Society, praying a Transfer of the Books composing the Library now in Saint Paul's Chapel."<sup>1</sup> Without delay the request was granted, "on condition that the said Society become incorporated according to Law."<sup>2</sup>

Although in a twelve-page pamphlet, published in 1816 as "Extracts from the Minutes of the Protestant Episcopal Library Society of New-York,"<sup>3</sup> the Society is expressly declared to have "since become incorporated," no such record appears, either in the archives of the state or legislative departments at Albany, or upon the registers in the New York county clerk's office. So fragmentary are any allusions that can be found to this little association, a forerunner of the General Theological Seminary, that it may not be amiss to devote a paragraph or two to its consideration, justification for their insertion being found in the very circumstances of its origin. According to Mr. Pintard's journal for 1814:

On Wednesday evening, 30<sup>th</sup> March, several Clergymen & Laymembers of the protestant Episcopal Church in this city met in the Episcopal Charity School room to take into consideration the propriety of forming an Association having for its object

<sup>1</sup> Trinity vestry minutes, II, 262.

<sup>2</sup> In chronicling this incident in the lately published, elaborate history of Trinity parish, the statement is made that "The Society did become incorporated and is now the 'New York Society Library' on University Place"—an institution then of fully sixty years' standing! (Vol. II, p. 196.) Though this mistake is later corrected (Vol. IV, p. 533), a small error still lingers in

calling this Society "Literary" instead of "Library," as the original minutes of the vestry, and indeed its own printed by-laws, show clearly was its actual name.

<sup>3</sup> A copy is in the Library of the N. Y. Hist. Society. A slightly defective copy is in the Library of the General Seminary, bound up as "No. 31a" in a book of pamphlets, "283.7471, P19."

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the collection of a Theological Library of all the most rare & valuable works in the various departments of sacred literature and science. Bishop Hobart presided—about 25 Gentlemen met. Rules prepared by the Rev<sup>d</sup> Doctor Bowen, who interests himself in this laudable pursuit, were reported & adopted, being similar & taken from the Rules for the Government of the N. York Society Library. The Admission Fee was fixed at Ten Dollars & Five Dollars annual dues. The meeting adjourned till Wed<sup>y</sup> 12 o'clock 13<sup>th</sup> April for election of Trustees.

The balloting resulted in the choice of Bishop Hobart as president ex officio, the trustees elected comprising the Rev. Dr. John Bowden, professor of rhetoric and belles-lettres in Columbia College, the Rev. Dr. Bowen, rector of Grace Church, the Rev. Dr. William Harris, rector of St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bowery and at the same time president of Columbia College, the Rev. Thomas Y. How and the Rev. Benjamin T. Onderdonk, assistant ministers of Trinity parish, the Rev. Dr. Samuel F. Jarvis, rector of St. Michael's, William Johnson and William Cutting, Esquires, lawyers of standing, and John Pintard, the prime mover of it all. His diary further records that a smaller gathering had been held on March 24th at Dr. Bowen's house, "to prepare Rules & Regulations for establishing a Library for the benefit of the Episcopal Clergy in this city . . . a Subject I have long had at heart, & on which I have often conversed with Doctor Bowen." Alluding to the old Parish Library, he says:

There is a small Library, established before the revolution, belonging to Trinity Church, which will be granted by the Vestry as the Basis of this institution. This Library consisting of donations may contain about 500. volumes of valuable Theological works. To the shame of Trinity Church [it] has never been

augmented but possibly been dilapidated. It is at present in a Chamber over the N. East door of St Pauls Church.



*By Whom these Devotional Offices  
are in beneficence given to the  
Parochial Library of Holy  
Trinity Church in N-York*

*City.*  
*Le*

## 42 THE LIBRARY IN COLONIAL NEW YORK

This historic old room<sup>1</sup> was long ago converted into a passageway to the gallery, but its dimensions cannot have been much changed, should any one wish to gaze upon the four walls which for so many years guarded portions of New York's early Libraries.

The Protestant Episcopal Library Society soon fulfilled its destiny,<sup>2</sup> becoming merged into the far better organized Protestant Episcopal Theological Society,<sup>3</sup> which in its turn gave rise to the General Theological Seminary. That numerous additions of books were received in the meantime is plain from a manuscript catalogue now in the General Seminary, and from a letter of John Pintard's to Bishop Hobart, dated March 14, 1822, in which he says: "The Books in St. Paul's, it is said, am<sup>t</sup> to 800 vs."; and of the entire collection, including 1000 volumes given to the Library during the early years of the Seminary in New Haven, he adds: "Considering the short period of the existence of the Sem<sup>y</sup> this number is far from contemptible, especially when their character & ponderosity are considered."<sup>4</sup>

It is therefore indeed fitting that the few survivors of this old Church of England Parish Library, founded in pious zeal for the use of the clergy, should be given a final asylum in the Library of an institution devoted to the training of young men for the Episcopal ministry.

<sup>1</sup> That it had a sacredness aside from the sentimental interest here ascribed to it, is plain from these words of Dr. Dix: "And now I have to mention the great glory of that ancient 'Library Room.' In it the General Theological Seminary was born; or there, at least, the first children were nurtured, and thence were they sent forth." P. 44, *Historical Recollections of St. Paul's Chapel, New York*.

<sup>2</sup> The treasurer's records, preserved

in the General Seminary, show a membership of 53 persons in 1817.

<sup>3</sup> "Hobart planned and organized a clerical association under the title of 'The Protestant Episcopal Theological Society.' From this as from a germ sprang our noble institution of learning, The General Theological Seminary." Morgan Dix. *History of Trinity Parish*. II, 236.

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Morgan Dix. *History of Trinity Parish*. III, 272.



2. *The Sharpe Collection, given in 1713 to found a  
"Publick Library" at New York*

TURNING now from the story of the first New York Library,—which never was a Public Library at all,—as from a tale that is told, and retracing our steps almost to the same early date, we hear again the voice of one crying in the unlettered wilderness. The name of this personage, next summoned from the shadowy past, bears a closer relationship to the still far distant Society Library than founder or patron of the old Parish Library. The Rev. John Sharpe, D.D., is the individual; and his connection with New York begins in his appointment by Governor Cornbury, October 20, 1704, as "Chaplain of her Majesty's Forces in the Province of New York."<sup>1</sup> This date should dispose of the oft-recurring anachronism that Mr. Sharpe was chaplain to Lord Bellomont, for the latter died March 5, 1701, more than three years earlier, and in fact four months before Mr. Sharpe left England. Inasmuch as no sketch of this good man has ever been published, and as his career has a direct bearing on our narrative, it is pertinent to give here, in outline at least, the known facts of his pilgrimage.

The record of his early years is simply told in a few sentences as preface to his private diary, entitled "A Journal of my Life—Exterieur," in which it is written: "On May 15<sup>th</sup> 1680 I was born at the Church of Bourty in the Presbytery of the Garrioch in the Kingdom of Scotland My ffather M<sup>r</sup> Alexander Sharpe Minister of

<sup>1</sup>The Sharpe diary, however, gives the date of actual investiture as Oct. 19. His commission is recorded in full in "Commissions," III, 95,

in the office of the Secretary of State, Albany. A rough draft is in "N. Y. Col. MSS.," XLVII, 54, State Library.

Said parish and Anne Douglass his wife my mother." He was evidently a precocious and studious lad, for he was graduated Master of Arts from the University of Aberdeen at the age of eighteen, whereupon he began the study of theology privately in the city of Edinburgh. Most touching is the glimpse of sentiment and filial affection revealed in these simple words: "At 20 I left my Fathers house May 18<sup>th</sup> 1700 and was accompanied by him to Aberdeen where I received his blessing at parting on that spot of ground where his Father blest him when he went to Ireland." His ordination to the ministry at the hands of the Bishop of London occurred in March, 1701.<sup>1</sup> On July 3d he "came on board her Ma<sup>ties</sup> Ship Southampton bound for Virg<sup>a</sup> and arrived there Sept<sup>r</sup> 8, 1701," whence he presently proceeded to Maryland.

Thus John Sharpe at twenty-one began laboring in the American mission field as one of Dr. Bray's appointees and under the auspices of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, just incorporated. So he doubtless became fully imbued with all Dr. Bray's plans, especially when settled where Parochial Libraries were most thickly planted. In 1702-1703 he was rector of Broad Neck parish, Anne Arundel county, and the next year at Snow Hill parish, Somerset county, both in Maryland. In May, 1708, with other clergymen he signed a petition "To his honour the President and Council," asking among other things "That Catalogues of Parochial Librarys be taken & sent to the Council."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> These statements are confirmed by the records of the London See at Fulham Palace in *Liber Subscription*, 1699-1709, containing also the signature of Mr. Sharpe after the customary oaths of conformity, etc. His name also appears in the orig-

inal book of subscriptions to the Act of Uniformity, etc., in the same diocese, preserved in the Rawlinson MSS. (B. 373), in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, viz: "John Sharpe, Maryland, April 26, 1701."

<sup>2</sup> "Proceedings of the Council,

The diary<sup>1</sup> of John Sharpe, now in the possession of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, states that its second part was "begun at point Love in Chesapeack bay in the province of Mary Land March 1. 1701," when its author was about to leave that section of the colonies. A partial explanation of his abrupt move comes from a wholly outside source in a letter from a Pennsylvania clergyman to the secretary of the S. P. G., dated March 20, 1704.<sup>2</sup> He says in part:

. . . & because Dear S<sup>r</sup> I have Sufficiently Experienced your Goodness, I dare open my whole Concern & fear, & that is this, I met w<sup>th</sup> one M<sup>r</sup> Sharp of Maryland, one who has been sent about 3 years since, he told me that D<sup>r</sup> Bray was his Friend, & procured a Support for him from that Honorable Body, but seems it was his Ill fortune to Quarrell w<sup>th</sup> D<sup>r</sup> Bray, since w<sup>ch</sup> time he has never rec<sup>d</sup> one Penny but the first £50. He has left Maryland, & thinks to settle in this Province or else in Burlington in E. Jersey. It is a Miserable thing if we that are so remote, stand Precarious to one Member's Displeasure. I could relate to you the most Surprising Storyes that I have had too sure reason to believe concerning D<sup>r</sup> B. of his Deportment towards the Principall Benef<sup>r</sup> our Church has in this Country, Coll<sup>l</sup> Nicholson Gov<sup>r</sup> of Virginia. You have undoubtedly heard Enough already, but you must Expect to hear a great deal More. [In a postscript he adds:] Since this was finished I hear that M<sup>r</sup> Sharp will take upon him the Itinerant office in M<sup>r</sup> Keith's Room.

1698-1731," *Archives of Maryland*. Baltimore, 1905. P. 160.

<sup>1</sup> A contemporary allusion to this journal appears in a letter from Col. Lewis Morris to Secretary Chamberlayne of the S. P. G., dated Feb. 20, 1711, in which he speaks of "Mr Sharp's narrative, who kept a Diary while in N York." *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 318. Extracts from the journal have been published (though with errors) in *The Penna.*

*Mag. of Hist.*, vol. XXIII (1899), pp. 104-105; and also in a pamphlet by the Rev. Joseph Hooper, "The Church in Connecticut, 1703-1807," privately printed for the Commission on Parochial Archives of Conn., June, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Henry Nicols of Chester, Penna., to the Rev. Mr. Stubs, London. *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. I A (copies).

By May, 1704, the wanderer had arrived in New Jersey, and for the next five months was busy helping the Rev. John Talbot in the evangelical work begun by George Keith. A good idea of his enthusiasm and success is given in these extracts from a letter from Mr. Talbot to Mr. Keith, dated at New York, October 20th.

M<sup>r</sup> Sharp was very zealous to bring y<sup>e</sup> Quakers to stand a Tryal, he carried one of y<sup>e</sup> Bombs<sup>1</sup> into their Meeting and read a new Challenge w<sup>ch</sup> I sent them to answer what they had printed. . . . M<sup>r</sup> Sharp and I have gon y<sup>e</sup> rounds several times from Burlington to Amboy to Hopewell to Eliz:Town to Staten Island in our Turns with good Success, God be blessed, in all places. He had gather'd a Church himself at Cheesquaks where he preacht several times, & Baptiz'd about 40 p<sup>ersons</sup>.<sup>2</sup>

Then, alluding to the chaplaincy, which had been first offered to himself, Mr. Talbot concludes:

Now I am alone for my Lord Cornbury has p<sup>re</sup>fer'd him to be Chaplain of her Mat<sup>ies</sup> Fort and Forces at N. York. I saw his Comission sign'd this day, in y<sup>e</sup> Room of M<sup>r</sup> Mott who dyed about 3. months agoe. I was loth to part with my good Friend and Companion in Travel, but considering how he had been disappointed at home I would not hinder his p<sup>re</sup>ferment abroad, hoping that y<sup>e</sup> good providence of God and y<sup>e</sup> venerable Society will supply his place.

Thus the young priest entered upon the last and longest period of his American ministry. His stipend as chaplain included board and lodging and £130 a year, payable weekly.<sup>3</sup> He was also directed by the governor

<sup>1</sup> A tract by the Rev. Francis Bugg.

<sup>2</sup> *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. II (copies), 1704-1706, no. xxiii. For his services in New Jersey, Mr.

Sharpe received £30 from the S. P. G. See *Letter Book*, vol. II (originals), 1704-1706, no. cxxix.

<sup>3</sup> "Mr Talbot to ye Society," London, March 14, 1705. *S. P. G. Letter*

to assist Mr. Vesey, who writes to the secretary of the S. P. G., February 26, 1705: ". . . nor do I now want an Assistant, for M<sup>r</sup> Sharp who since [he] had his Commission to be Chaplain of the Forces, is order'd by my L<sup>d</sup> Cornbury to assist me & to preach every Sunday."<sup>1</sup>

Even a cursory glance through his little old "Journal" impresses one with the sense of John Sharpe's having been an earnest, conscientious soul, tender and kind, without trace of envy or rancor, a true lover of his fellows. Fond of the open air and the water, he "walked a Shooting" and "went a fishing" with wholesome zest. Plainly of a genial temper, tactful and loyal, he continued at intervals to visit "my Lord" Cornbury in his durance in the debtors' prison, up to the departure of that discredited nobleman, at whose wife's funeral he had delivered an eloquent tribute.<sup>2</sup> He also won and held the esteem of his successor, Governor Hunter, and of such public leaders as Col. Lewis Morris, afterward chief justice, and Col. Caleb Heathcote, mayor of the city, as well as the regard of his own more intimate associates, Elias Neau, catechist, and William Huddleston, master of the charity school. On one occasion he acted as security for William Bradford, the printer, on a bond to the vestry of Trinity.<sup>3</sup> But social diversions and physical recreation could not interfere with his performance of duty, to judge by the monotonous entries, "at Study" and "preach'd."

He seems to have been popular with his troops, whom

*Book*, vol. II A (copies), 1704-1706, no. cxlii.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, no. lxxvii.

<sup>2</sup> This sermon, printed by Bradford at New York in 1706, was twice reprinted at London, and sold "for the Benefit of the Poor." A Brad-

ford copy is in the Library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. Copies of the reprints are less rare.

<sup>3</sup> "Journal," March 13, 1711; corroborated in Trinity vestry minutes, I, 58, 81.

he accompanied on the expeditions of 1709 and 1711 against the French in northern New York. At times he addressed the Iroquois on religious topics, such ministrations being regularly supplemented with "a barrell of beer." For a large part of his term the old chapel in the

*A Journal of my life - Exterior.*

On May 10<sup>th</sup> 1680 I was born at the Church of Stourly in the Parish of Long of the Garrison in the Kingdom of Scotland. My father Mr. Alexander Sharpe Minister of St. Andrew and Anne Douglas his wife my mother.

At nine years of age I was put under the Care of Mr. John Findlater Mr. of the Grammar School in New Aberdeen.

At 14 I was put under the Care of Mr. William Black Professor of philosophy in Kings College Aberdeen where I stayed the usual term of four years and was made M. A. July 1690.

At 19 years I was sent to Edinburgh and by my Uncle Mr. Henry Douglas I was committed to Mr. George Campbell Professor of Divinity where I spent the summer.

At 20 I left my Father's house May 10<sup>th</sup> 1700 and was accompanied by him to Aberdeen where I received his blessing at parting on that spot of ground where his Father slept him when he would die. So I came in company with my dear friend Mr. George John Minister of New Machar then sent abroad by the Episcopal Regy in the world to the parliament.

In June there was a great riot committed by a Rabble in the City from what I was informed. &c.

fort was in a ruinous state; but, on its restoration by Governor Hunter in 1711,<sup>1</sup> he held services there regularly. During the interval he had made tours embracing Long Island and neighboring towns in New York and in a portion of Connecticut, to officiate in communities without church organization, thereby accomplishing, in the words of Elias Neau, "a great deal of good here these six Years."<sup>2</sup> His return from these little trips, as well as from longer ones, invariably brings out a fervent "*Deo Gratias*" in the journal.

On November 2, 1710, the good chaplain seems to have reached the acme of human happiness, to judge from an entry heavily underscored in scarlet: "This day I was married to my dearest M<sup>rs</sup> *Margarita Dreijer. Deo Gloria in Eternum.*" According to such evidence as is now available, this young woman was a daughter of Andries Draeyer (or Drauyer), a Dane,<sup>3</sup> who had commanded at Fort Albany in later days of Dutch rule, and who was an officer of the Dutch fleet in American waters. Another daughter, Anna Dorothea, became the wife of the Rev. Thomas Barclay, D.D., rector of St. Peter's Church at Albany,<sup>4</sup> whose son Henry, second

<sup>1</sup> "The Queens Chappel in the Fort, that from the time of Coll Fletcher till his [Gov. Hunter's] arrivall had been put to the several uses of Store house, Bear house, and work house, he took care to have decently fitted up and applied to the use it was built for, and the Soldiers, who before were carried out of the Garrison and during the service stood for the most part in the Steeple, where they could but imperfectly hear, are now very well accommodated with Seats in the Chappel, where the service is regularly performed." Col. Morris to Secy. Chamberlayne, Feb. 20, 1711. *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, V, 320.

<sup>2</sup> Elias Neau to the Rev. John Chamberlayne, July 5, 1710. *S. P. G. Letter Book*.

<sup>3</sup> His wife was Gerritje Van Schaick, whose sister was the wife of the Rev. Bernardus Freeman, a Reformed Dutch minister at New Utrecht, L. I., and formerly a successful missionary among the Mohawks. He had been appointed by Gov. Bellomont until an English clergyman should be sent over.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Hooper. *A History of Saint Peter's Church in the City of Albany*. Albany, 1900. P. 63; also, R. Burnham Moffat. *The Barclays of New York*. New York, 1904. P. 51.

rector of Trinity Church, was to be in 1754 a member of the first board of Trustees of the New York Society Library.

The Sharpe diary, to its abrupt close in 1713, contains not a word about its author's literary tastes, let alone his private library or plans for a public institution. Nor is it till near the end of his sojourn in New York that his views on the subject begin to appear in his correspondence. In a long letter<sup>1</sup> to the secretary of the S. P. G., dated December 4, 1710, he says in part that it would be "highly conducive" to the work of the Society to have "provincial and parochial Librarys erected," "a great many good Collections of Books" having been sent to "the Metropolis of the several provinces of Maryland, Pensylvania, New York and Boston." If these collections were only "under good regulation, there would be considerable Additions made dayly by Charitable Persons here." To prevent the "Inconvenience" of the books' becoming scattered, "it wou'd be very Adviseable that there shou'd be Compleat Catalogues of the several parochial Librarys lodged in the hand of some Minister or Member of the Society, according to which the Libraries might be now and then reviewed and secured upon the death or removal of any of the Missionary's"; and, in case of additions through "the Benevolence of any here, it might be Notified to the Ven<sup>ble</sup> Society."

Coming to his personal interest in the matter, the chaplain continues:

Mr Talbot and I have talked of building a Superstructure, to which I will sell one part and dedicate the other of my small Library upon my death or removal from this Country. I have

<sup>1</sup>S. P. G. *Letter Book* (copies), in Gen. Conv. Arch., N. Y. MSS., I, vol. VI, 1710-1711, no. 1. A copy is 230-232.



sent you a Catalogue of such as I wou'd sell to the Society (having others in my View to fill up the room). As for the price I leave it to be set by the Society's Book-seller, and if you agree to take them I shall give Orders where the Money shall be paid, and before such Order, upon the Intimation of your pleasure, shall deliver them to M<sup>r</sup> Talbot or any others you shall appoint, and transmit the receipt of them before I receive the Money.

He concludes with a request for "some hundred of the Society's Seal to fix on the adverse page of the Title page as is usual."<sup>1</sup>

Two years passed, however, without any action or further mention of the purpose in his heart, until March, 1713, when Governor Hunter granted him leave of absence, nominally "to see his aged Parent,"<sup>2</sup> but no less particularly to set forth "y<sup>e</sup> Posture of Ecclesiastical Affairs in these Provinces"<sup>3</sup> to the church authorities at home. He bore with him letters of high endorsement from the governor to English dignitaries. In one he is said to have "too much Sence to be Imposed on and too much Probity to Impose upon others,"<sup>4</sup> and in another characterized as "a very worthy, ingenious, and conscientious clergyman."<sup>5</sup> But a single jarring note appears to have been struck amid the general chords of approval. It sounds as follows from General Francis Nicholson, formerly governor of Virginia, in a commu-

<sup>1</sup> Not one volume of the Sharpe collection, however, bears an S. P. G. bookplate.

<sup>2</sup> His mother is of course meant, as the records of the Presbytery of Ellon, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, show that the Rev. Alexander Sharp died Feb. 20, 1709, his son, according to his journal, receiving on August 29th "ane account of my dear fathers death & Bel" to which sad entry he adds in characteristic fashion "Requiem Eternam."

<sup>3</sup> Gov. Hunter to the Secretary, March 14, 1713. *S. P. G. Letter Book* (copies), vol. VIII A, 1712-1713, no. xv, p. 123.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Gov. Hunter to Dean Swift, March 14, 1713. *Letters written by Jonathan Swift, D.D. . . . and several of his Friends*. London, 1767. Vol. I, pp. 281-282. See also "The Rev. Mr. Sharpe to Dr. Swift," *ibid.*, pp. 320-321.

nication to the secretary of the S. P. G., from Boston, December 1, 1713, several months after John Sharpe's return to England:

I beg the Society will be pleased not to give intire Credit to any offer or Representation of the Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Jn<sup>o</sup> Sharpe (late Chaplain to Her Majestys forces in N York Governmt) for himself or others without Good Authority and Proofs I knowing him to be a Person of double dealing &c and am Sorry I am not in London to call him to Acc<sup>t</sup> as a Deserter for running away from his Duty as Chaplain to the said Forces on the last Designed Expedition to Canada and more heartily Sorry to have this and many other things to lay to the charge of any Person in Sacred Orders.<sup>1</sup>

More in explanation of such language than of the charge conveyed, it must be said that Francis Nicholson, though a generous contributor to the interests of the church in Virginia and South Carolina, was jealous, passionate and headstrong in temperament, and far from deserving "intire Credit to any offer or Representation" he himself might make. Bitterly chagrined at the failure of his carefully planned expedition, he was only too ready to denounce any one connected with it. That his charge was unjust in this case is plain from the Sharpe diary, whose author left Camp Nicholson in September, 1711, because of illness, proofs of which, including a physician's "affadavit," were several times sent to the general.

It is evident that Chaplain Sharpe not only had kept in mind his Library plan but had been developing it all the while, and was to make its announcement one of the main objects of his visit to England. For, on the eve of

<sup>1</sup> *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. VIII, p. 525.

his departure, he drew up a remarkable paper, dated March 11, 1713, in which he declared it his intention to promote the establishment of "A Publick School," "A

( 2 )

New York. March. 11<sup>th</sup>. 1712/13

That this voyage which I now undertake may in some measure contribute to the glory of God and the good of his Church in these parts of which I have now spent two hundred years. I am resolved by the assistance of his Divine Grace, when I arrive in England to promote to the utmost of my power these three things.

1. A Publick School
2. A Publick Library
3. A Satisfying Chapel.

There is hardly any thing which is more wanted in this Country than Learning there being no place I know of in America where it is either less encouraged or regarded.

The City is so conveniently situated for Trade and the Genius of the people so inclined to traffick, that they generally seek no other Education for their children than writing and arithmetick. So that Letters must be in a manner forced upon them not only without their seeking, but against their consent, and there is no doubt but as the youth:

Publick Library" and "A Catechising Chappel" in the city of New York.

He mournfully explains that "There is hardly any thing which is more wanted in this Countrey than learning there being no place I know of in America where it is either less encouraged or regarded." This sad condition he accounts for in the following words, which suggest an applicability to New York in less remote times. "The City," he says, "is so conveniently Scituated for Trade and the Genius of the people so inclined to merchandise, that they generally seek no other Education for their children than writing and arithmetick. So that letters must be in a manner forced upon them not only without their seeking, but against their consent."

After elaborating his theories of founding and governing schools, he proceeds to "The Library," saying: "Another thing which is very much wanted here is a publick Library, which would very much advance both learning and piety. Such there are at Charles Town in Carolina, Annapolis in Mary Land, at Philadelphia and Boston. Some books have been formerly sent to New York but as *parochial* they remain in the hands of the Incumbent." In contradistinction to this last-named—at once recognizable as the Library of Trinity parish—the proposed institution should be "publick and provincial" and "open every day in the week at convenient hours," when "all men may have liberty to read in the Library." As evidence of his advanced ideas, it need only be said that the Society Library, founded in 1754, was not made accessible daily until 1791.

Eight regulations are suggested, by which, in addition to the above, it appears that the use of the books and the lighting should be free, though each borrower of a vol-

ume must "sign to a receipt or obligation to return it at such a time," for which the librarian was to receive sixpence. Also, the subscription element was to be purely voluntary, a book to "ly on the table where it may be lawful for others to subscribe books or money." A catalogue, signed by the governor, the mayor and a clergyman, must be sent to the English primate; and like the Bray libraries the proposed institution must be visited once in three years by these same officials, who should "certify the improvements or Embezelments to the Trustees in England to be appoynted by his Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London."

His plan expands, amazing in its scope, as he beholds the Library "a Repository of all such Rarities as the Countrey produces, or are brought hither from other places to be communicated to the Ingenious in Europe." It might as well comprise also "a small garden of rare and Exotick plants to send yearly some to the curious in England and have others in Exchange."<sup>1</sup> And he was desirous to have the Library under the same roof as the

<sup>1</sup>There is in this proposition not a little resemblance to the scheme of the celebrated Frenchman, Alexandre Vattenmare, for "an international exchange of all that is valuable in science, literature, natural history and the fine arts—and the establishment in every nation and state of an *institution* (under the fostering care of its government), to receive these exchanges, forming not only a *museum* illustrative as well of the powers of nature, as of the state of perfection to which the productions of the human mind and hand have arrived, or are tending to in every quarter of the globe, but a kind of *patent office*, where the creations of the industry, the achievement of the intellect, of the inventive faculties, and of govern-

ments of each country, may at once and always be assigned to their true origin, and always verified without doubt or difficulty." Address of M. Vattenmare before the two houses of the N. Y. Legislature, Oct. 30, 1847. This was a mission he had been conducting for twenty years with fitful success. It was in consequence of his securing to the city of New York, in 1848, for example, a "splendid case of valuable medals, commemorative of interesting events during the administration of" Pope Pius IX, that the present City Library was instituted in the City Hall by the local authorities in January, 1849. See *Proceedings of the Boards of Aldermen and Assistant Aldermen approved by the Mayor*. Vol. XVI. New York, 1849.

school, for it would be "a motive to the Industry and application of the scholars when they see so good provision made for their Studys." O Chaplain, great was thy faith!

The innate sincerity and goodness of the man shine out in the concluding passages, in which he avows his long-cherished resolve to bestow "for a foundation or beginning to this Library . . . all my own books, which I now have or may have at the time of my decease or leaving of that countrey, which shall be put up in it how soon it is fitted to receive them"; for, he pathetically acknowledges, "the undertaking looks so formidably great (at first) that something must be done to make it seem possible." Modestly reserving for himself "during life or stay in the countrey free access" to the Library of his dreams, "and leave to borrow . . . under the same restrictions and limitations as others," he reverently entreats in closing: "So God prosper the work."

Appended to the "Proposals" is a catalogue of his precious collection, "intended to be given as a foundation of a Publick Library at New York," comprising 146 volumes, of which 105 appear to have been left behind by the donor. They are classified much like the Bray collections, as follows:

I the holy Scriptures, 9; II Criticks and Commentators, 20; III Fathers and Schoolmen, 20; IV Discourses, Apologetical, 6; V Ecclesiastical History, Chronology, Chorography, 4; VI Body's of Divinity, 18; VII Practical Divinity, 24; VIII Controversial Tracts, 11; IX Philology, History, &c, 18; X Devotional, 16.

These books were left with his friend Elias Neau, until the passage of an act of assembly, which he confidently

predicts "can be easily obtained to secure the said Library for ever."<sup>1</sup>

The original manuscript is now in the Library of Lambeth Palace.<sup>2</sup> A somewhat defective copy, now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, contains a dedicatory page, dated in London, July 11, 1713, and thus inscribed:

TO THE MOST Reverend Fathers in God the Arch Bishops, To the Right Reverend the Bishops, To the Reverend the Clergy. And to all the Learned and pious Patrons and Promoters of Piety and Learning in the Kingdom of Great Britaine

This following Proposal as a means of its Advancement in the Province of New York and other parts of America

Is most humbly dedicated and with most profound Respect and Deference to their Godly Wisdom, is intirely Submitted by,

Their most faithfull Servant and ffellow-Labourer in Christ Jesus our Lord and Master

JOHN SHARPE Chaplaine to her Majestys Garisons in the province of New York.<sup>3</sup>

The catalogue attached to this copy is dated May 15, 1715, and enumerates 238 volumes, including those left behind, "given towards laying the Foundation of a Publick Library at New York in America." This statement of actual gift is borne out by the final paragraph: "London July 15<sup>th</sup> 1715. To the Glory of God and the Advancement of true Religion and Virtue in the Infant Church of America I do freely and heartily give & resign at this time all the above mention'd books." The

<sup>1</sup> From his copy of 1715.

<sup>2</sup> The MS. itself bears no label or endorsement. In the Lambeth catalogue it is in vol. 841, "Proposals for erecting a School, Library and Chapel at New York, 1712-13." The paper was printed in full in the *Collections of the New York*

*Historical Society for 1880*, though a comparison of its text with photographs of the original document discloses variations in spelling, etc.

<sup>3</sup> A copy of this copy is in the *S. P. G. Letter Book*, "Letters Received," vol. X A (copies), 1714-1715.

additional volumes were despatched oversea for Elias Neau to put with those already in his hands, the whole collection being thereupon formally presented by Dr. Sharpe, as he had then become, to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in trust for a Public Library.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, despite his sanguine expectation and efforts of the Venerable Society, seconded by Elias Neau and Chaplain Jenney,<sup>2</sup> and notwithstanding the evident favor of Governors Hunter and Burnet in turn, no measure to establish the proposed Library by statute seems even to have come before the provincial legislature.<sup>3</sup> In May, 1723, Governor Burnet wrote to Secretary Humphreys of the S. P. G. that he had received the books from Mr. Neau, but that he feared it would "take some time to bring the Assembly into the Notion of a Publick Library."<sup>4</sup>

So the little collection remained with the governor. In all likelihood it was examined by young Benjamin Franklin when entertained by Burnet in 1724, for in his autobiography Franklin says: "The then governor of New York, Burnet (son of Bishop Burnet), hearing from the captain that a young man, one of his passengers, had a great many books, desir'd he would bring me to see him. . . . The gov'r. treated me with great civility, show'd me his library, which was a very large one, and we had a good deal of conversation about books and authors."<sup>5</sup> It is natural to suppose that their talk

<sup>1</sup> Basis for these statements is found in the correspondence between Elias Neau, Gov. Hunter, Gov. Burnet, et al. and the secy. of the S. P. G., in the *S. P. G. Letter Books*.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 28.

<sup>3</sup> This fact is established by a vain search through "Bills which failed

to become Laws, 1683-1770." MS. no. 44, State Library, Albany.

<sup>4</sup> *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. XVII A (copies), 1722-1723, pp. 230-231.

<sup>5</sup> *The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin*. Edited by John Bigelow. New York, 1867. Vol. I, pp. 73-74.



embraced a discussion, not merely of the Sharpe plans, but also of the general "Notion of a Publick Library."

Whether or not Franklin, "the father of social libraries in this country,"<sup>1</sup> in listening to the proposals of poor Chaplain Sharpe, then and there received the inspiration that eventually led him to organize a library in his adopted home, is of course purely a matter for conjecture. His institution, which he calls "the Philadelphia public library"<sup>2</sup> and "the mother of all the North American subscription libraries,"<sup>3</sup> was founded in 1731 and formally chartered eleven years later as The Library Company of Philadelphia, and is to-day the largest as well as the oldest Proprietary Library in the United States.

There is nothing, however, in Franklin's available writings to confirm or even to suggest any indebtedness to Sharpe. And if such a surmise should ever prove true, ahead of Sharpe appears the primal genius of Bray; while, moreover, Franklin's own birthplace, Boston, possessed a "publike Library" in its town house prior to 1675.<sup>4</sup> Nor would our great savant's reputation for originality suffer by such an admission. His acuteness of perception, no less than his public spirit, is revealed in his successfully adapting the ineffectual plans of Bray and Sharpe (for institutions publicly supported) to the subscription scheme, in which movement he is regarded as the pioneer of the English-speaking world.<sup>5</sup>

To return to John Sharpe in closing. Unfortunately

<sup>1</sup> *Free Public Libraries*, a pamphlet published by the American Social Science Association, Boston, 1871. P. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin*. Edited by John Bigelow, N. Y., 1887. Vol. I, p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 159.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 4n2.

<sup>5</sup> Ainsworth R. Spofford. *A Book for All Readers*. New York, 1900. P. 299.

his last years are at the present writing shrouded in obscurity. Soon after his return from America, he took his doctor's degree in divinity, January 6, 1714, at his loved alma mater, King's College in the University of Aberdeen, his thesis being "a latine discourse upon some subject in theologie."<sup>1</sup> In June of that year he innocently fell among thorns in suffering himself to be "forcibly presented" by two of his Aberdeen faculty into the pulpit of Old Machar, where he gave further offence by using the Anglican ritual. In the justiciary process that ensued at Edinburgh, he was sentenced to be "incapable of enjoying any parish Church Stipend or Benefice within Scotland for the Space of Seven years,"—in effect a virtual decree of banishment from his native heath.<sup>2</sup>

The next known of him is that in 1717 he published a treatise in London, a work of a scholarly and deeply religious character.<sup>3</sup> In the meantime he had resigned the chaplaincy at New York, his successor, the Rev. Robert Jenney, receiving a commission from King George I, dated September 17, 1717.<sup>4</sup> Then comes a melancholy allusion to "the late D<sup>r</sup> Sharpe, once Chaplain to the Garrison," in a letter written by Secretary Humphreys to Governor Burnet in June, 1722.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>From the faculty minutes, King's College, Aberdeen, Jan. 2, 1714. The thesis, a 16-page pamphlet, entitled *De Rebus Liturgicis*, was printed at Aberdeen the same year. A copy is in the Library of Glasgow University.

<sup>2</sup>See *Officers and Graduates of University and King's College, Aberdeen*. MVD-MDCCCLX. Aberdeen, 1893; also, MS. "Justiciary Decisions, Edinburgh, 1710-1721," vol. II. (Copy in Society Library.)

<sup>3</sup>*The Charter of the Kingdom of*

*Christ, explain'd in Two Hundred Conclusions and Corollaries, from the Last Words of our Blessed Lord to his Disciples* . . . London, 1717. A copy is in the British Museum.

<sup>4</sup>"Grant Warrants," Colonial Office, London. Vol. XV, p. 114.

<sup>5</sup>A puzzling allusion to Dr. Sharpe appears in a letter from the Rev. John Milne of Albany to the S. P. G., dated June 20, 1728. Referring to his predecessor, Dr. Barclay, he says: "The prejudices which

It is sad indeed, not only that the date of death and the burial-place of this first proposer of a free Public Library in New York are unknown, but also that the last days of so public-spirited a man should have been spent in poverty and neglect. For it appears from letters of Governor Burnet and Elias Neau that he had become so destitute as to have written to the latter, in the spring of 1721, asking piteously for the return of his as yet un-established Library "to get a little Money to subsist on," being "very poor" and "reduced to a state of misery." More important a date to posterity than that of his death, however, is the year 1713, when a Public Library was first proposed in New York; and a higher sentiment than even a gravestone could evoke lingers about the remains of John Sharpe's beloved collection to-day, in their last quiet resting-place in the New York Society Library.

How and when these books, now numbering 124 volumes under 104 titles,<sup>1</sup> actually became a part of the Society Library, cannot confidently be told at the present writing, notwithstanding long and diligent search, for the records of that institution are absolutely mute on the subject. The following theory as to their history is suggested as tenable, at least until the facts come to light. In the first place they seem never to have formed a part of the Trinity Parish Library, as the catalogue of that collection includes comparatively few of their titles, and those the common ones of the day. It is probable, then, that they were joined to the Corporation Library,

he and one Sharp his brother-in-law, who is since gone to the Church of Rome, have given too just ground for, are like to be the greatest obstacles I shall meet with in this

place." (Copy in Gen. Conv. Arch., N. Y. MSS., vol. II, pp. 18-20.)

<sup>1</sup>The Sharpe Collection to-day comprises 49 folios, 3 quartos, 13 octavos, 13 duodecimos and 46 of smaller fold.

on its arrival and opening in 1730, Governor Burnet having no doubt left them in trust to his successor, Governor Montgomerie.

In 1754, when the Society Library was founded and was allowed to store its new collection in the City Hall, on condition of caring for the worn-out Corporation Library, permission was given also to box up books held to be "of no Service & scarce ever read." Many of the Sharpe tomes would have answered this description as perfectly then as now, and may well have been the ones meant. So, when such few books as the vandals spared in 1776 were hastily given sanctuary in St. Paul's Chapel, it was an easy matter to carry the boxes to that place of safety. Otherwise it would be hard to explain how the collection should have been preserved comparatively intact.

After slumbering a generation longer, the books at last saw the light again upon the opening of that room. From what will be said later, it is plain that no portion of the Corporation Library shared this captivity. But, as the Sharpe books bore no S. P. G. bookplate and yet were known to have been under the control of the "City Library," as the Society Library was commonly called in its early years, it is probable that they were at once handed over to that institution, on the release and distribution of the long-imprisoned collections in 1802. That they were preserved in St. Paul's Chapel seems reasonably certain from the fact, already mentioned, that a single volume bearing John Sharpe's name has been kept for years with the relics of the Trinity parochial collection. The probability also is that together with them went, naturally enough, the old Clarendon history, doubtless because it also bore no S. P. G. bookplate and

chiefly because of its label, "Belonging to y<sup>e</sup> Library of New York in America," which, with the character of the book, would not readily suggest its former connection with the Parish Library. The dominant fact, however, is this: the Sharpe books and this Clarendon history came to the Society Library sometime between 1800 and 1813, for they are enumerated for the first time in the catalogue of the latter year.

As for these venerable books themselves, each of the weary-looking volumes displays on fly-leaf or title-page the good chaplain's autograph, written in a variety of ways, as "Johannis Sharpe," "Joh: Sharpe," and "John Sharp," together with the year of acquisition in each case. It appears he dropped the final "e" after leaving America; but it is retained in this work for the reason that he so spelled his name during his residence in New York, and on his Proposals. In some of the books occurs also this motto, "*Ad quid venisti?*," which may convey a choice of meanings according to the emphasis in the modern translation, "What have you come to?" Is it a lamentation or a jest, or may it not be simply, to quote the Proposals, "on the title page or cover such inscription badge or Impression as the Trustees shall appoynt."

In response to the natural query why the idea of a Public Library as proposed by Dr. Sharpe did not strike root in New York, it may be replied that in the narrow and jealous view of the average provincial assembly-man<sup>1</sup> it was merely an administrative measure, which would call for annual appropriations from the treasury,

<sup>1</sup> Governor Hunter wrote to Dean Swift from New York, March 14, 1713, in the same letter in which he spoke so highly of John Sharpe: "Here is the finest air to live upon

in the universe. And if our trees and birds could speak, and our assemblymen be silent, the finest conversation too." See p. 31*ns*.

besides giving a purchase for interference from the executive or from the home government at some future time. Furthermore, as in the case of the earlier Parish Library, the proposed institution would be under Anglican control largely, a prospect none too pleasing to the "Dissenters" of the Dutch Church, still in a strong majority. But above all else, there had not as yet been developed the proper intellectual activity to offer sympathy and support to the plan. Like Dr. Bray, John Sharpe was far in advance of his times.

### *3. The Millington Bequest, or the Corporation Library, 1730-1776*

LITTLE as the Knickerbocker of the early 18th century may have relished the growing influence of the established church, and reluctant as he certainly was to further—not to say active in trying to thwart<sup>1</sup>—the worthy objects attempted in her name, the fact remains that to one of the organizations sanctioned by the Church of England is due the credit for founding the first Public Circulating Library in New York. It came about in this wise.

On the 25th of March, 1728, there died in Kensington, England, the Rev. John Millington, D.D., for the past twenty-three years rector of St. Mary's at Stoke Newington, a parish in Middlesex, about three miles north of

<sup>1</sup>Elias Neau, catechist to the negroes, complained bitterly of a city ordinance of March, 1713, "for Regulating Negro & Indian Slaves in the Night Time,"—by which they were forbidden to appear on the streets an hour after sunset without lighted "Lanthorns,"—as an in-

tended "obstacle to stop the Designs of the Illustrious Society [S. P. G.]," and as "a Snare" for his school. Mr. Neau to the Rev. John Chamberlayne (contemporary translation), Sept. 8, 1713. *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. VIII, p. 173.

London. He had also held the titles and offices of fellow of Magdalen Hall, Cambridge, chaplain to the Bishop of London, vicar of Kensington and prebendary of Newington. Always generous to the church and toward his own parish, at his death he left handsome bequests to religious work. Among his beneficiaries was the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, of which body he had long been a member, as also one of its early officers.<sup>1</sup>

In its annual abstract of proceedings for 1729, the statement is made that he had bequeathed to the Society £200 "and all his Books, being a very valuable Library, which Books he desires should be sent together to the Plantations in *America*; and the Society have agreed to send them to *New York*, as soon as an Act of Assembly shall be passed for their due Preservation."

The Society had acted promptly, despatching a letter dated September 23, 1728, to Governor Montgomerie. This notification he took nearly a year to answer, until he could give "a satisfactory account of the proceedings of the General Assembly." After returning thanks, he calls attention to enclosed copies of the action taken by the legislature and by the Common Council of the city to "effectually provide for the reception and preservation of the Books." He requests the exact "dementions" of the gift, lest the authorities should "fall into some mistake" in preparing accommodations; and closes with a promise "to have the room so contrived, that it may be enlarged in case the Library encreases."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For sources see the various S. P. G. "Abstracts" (the N. Y. Hist. Soc. has a complete set); William Robinson. *The History and Antiquities of the Parish of Stoke Newington* . . . London, 1842; and *Novum Re-*

*portorium Ecclesiasticum Parochiale Londinense* . . . Compiled by George Hennessy. London, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> Governor Montgomerie to the Rev. David Humphreys, D.D., secretary of the S. P. G., Aug. 29, 1729.

Meanwhile, June 24, 1729, the assembly had listened to the S. P. G. letter, as read by Speaker Adolph Philipse, designating the collection to be "a Library, from which the Clergy and Gentlemen of this Government, and *Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut*, might borrow Books to read, upon giving Security to return them within a limited Time." No doubt murmurings of high pleasure passed from one to another at the favoring discrimination shown their community, "in preferring it before any of his Majesty's other Plantations on this Continent, to reposit a Library in," an institution that would "not only redound to the Reputation of this Colony, but be vastly useful and beneficial to the Inhabitants thereof."<sup>1</sup> But before passing any resolutions the Common Council must be heard from.

With praiseworthy despatch the city fathers convened three days later to act in their turn. Mayor Lutting was promptly requested to thank the "Honourable House" for its message, and to say they were "truly sensible of the great Advantages which may arise from so Generous and seasonable a present," which they were "zealously disposed to Receive." They agreed "to provide a large Room," and were "inclin'd" to prepare "Shelves, Desks, Seats and Other Accommodations," when the precise extent of the collection should be ascertained.<sup>2</sup>

After an interval of ten months, on April 22, 1730, the Common Council was informed of the arrival of twenty-

*S. P. G. Letter Book* (originals), vol. I B, no. 57.

<sup>1</sup>*Journal of the Votes and Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Colony of New-York, 1691-1743*. Printed by Hugh Gaine. New York, 1764. Vol. I, p. 601.

<sup>2</sup>*Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1675-1776*. New York, 1903. Vol. III, p. 475. The original letter with signatures is in the *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. I B, no. 57a. See p. 71.



three cases containing 1642 volumes, "for a Publick Library for this City,"<sup>1</sup> brought over in the good ship *Alexander*, Dennis Downing, master, and "ready to be landed and delivered." A committee of five (including John Roosevelt, an ancestor of President Roosevelt, and John Chambers, later a member of the first board of Trustees of the Society Library) was directed to receive the books and put them in the City Hall. Also, should they "find Occasion," they were "to Open the Said Cases and Cause the Said Books to be wiped and Cleaned and an Inventory thereof to be taken." Lastly they were to "Consider of a proper place for the said Library," and to estimate the cost of its installation.

At the next meeting of the Corporation, early in June, the committee announced with almost childish precision:

We did Receive the above mentioned twenty three Cases of Books Containing Sixteen hundred and forty two Volumes which Cases we Opened and took the Books out and put them in the Assembly Room of which Alderman Philipse has the Key. And we are of Opinion that the Room Opposite to the Common Council Room in the City Hall<sup>2</sup> will be a proper place for depositing the Said Books and that the same be made Convenient

<sup>1</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, IV, 10.

<sup>2</sup> This structure, the second of the three City Halls, was erected in 1700 on the site of the present sub-treasury building at the junction of Wall and Nassau streets, facing Broad. It is thus described in the year 1756: "The City Hall is a strong Brick Building, two Stories in Height, in the Shape of an Ob-long, winged with one at each End, at right Angles with the first. The Floor below is an open Walk, except two Jails and the Jailor's Apartments. The Cellar underneath is a Dungeon, and the Garret above a

common Prison. This Edifice is erected in a Place where four Streets meet, and fronts, to the South-west, one of the most spacious Streets in Town. The Eastern Wing, in the second Story, consists of the Assembly Chamber, a Lobby and a small Room for the Speaker of the House. The West Wing, on the same Floor, forms the Council Room and a Library; and in the Space between the Ends, the *Supreme Court* is ordinarily held." William Smith. *The History of the Province of New-York*. London, 1757. P. 194.

as soon as may be but the manner of doing thereof we humbly Refer to the Consideration of this Board.<sup>1</sup>

Its report being at once approved, the committee was ordered to "Employ Workmen and Purchase Materials for fitting up a Convenient Room or Chamber," as recommended, "for Containing the said Library with Convenient Shelves and Desks Nessessary thereunto."<sup>2</sup>

On July 20th Governor Montgomerie wrote briefly again to Secretary Humphreys of the Society, renewing appreciation and assurances that the Corporation would treat the gift with "great Care."<sup>3</sup> Two days later the Common Council, after ordering a receipt to the Rev. Mr. Vesey—still rector of Trinity Church, and since 1714 the S. P. G. commissary for New York—for the cases of books, and directing the same committee to have a catalogue made and to have the books cleaned and put into the "Library Room," requested Recorder Harison to "prepare the Draft of a letter of thanks &c, . . . then to be fair drawn, signed by the Mayor,"<sup>4</sup> and sent abroad. This epistle, of the same date, informed the Society that there had been "furnished and Compleated an handsome large Room for the Reception of them and a much greater Number whenever we shall be so happy to see any Addition made to this their Noble Benefaction!"<sup>5</sup> In conclusion they said: "The Approaching session of Assembly Encourages us to hope that we shall be Enabled to take all proper Measures for the Preservation of this Library, and the Keeping it in such Manner as may best Answer the Intention of the Donors, in all which worthy purposes we have already received (and

<sup>1</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, IV, 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> *S. P. G. Letter Book* (copies), vol. XXIII A, no. 11, p. 77.

<sup>4</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, IV, 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18.

have further Assurances of) his Excellencys Patronage and Encouragement."

Nevertheless, Governor Montgomerie seems never to have formally recommended that the assembly should confirm the Library by statute, nor did that body ever carry out its intention, expressed June 27, 1729, "to pass an Act for the due preservation of the Books when here."<sup>1</sup> These particulars have been given to show that the legislature took no active part in the establishment of the first Public Library in New York city; that in this important event "home rule" was not questioned. And further, inasmuch as the Corporation met all the contingent costs of the new enterprise,—amounting altogether to fully £85,<sup>2</sup> a very respectable sum for that day, especially in view of the really small size of the collection,—it was only natural that the institution should come to be called the Corporation Library—that is to say, controlled by the Corporation of the city, technically termed "The Mayor, Aldermen and Commonalty of the City of New York."

The appointment of a librarian finds no mention in the minutes of the Common Council for some years. In several histories of New York city it is asserted that the Rev. John Sharpe, "still living," was put in charge, but "being an aged man did not long survive his appointment."<sup>3</sup> Even were he then living,—which does not seem probable, from the statement to Governor Burnet already quoted,—he would have been only just fifty years of age. This tradition is perhaps based on the probable union of the old Sharpe collections with the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of . . . General Assembly*, I, 602.

<sup>2</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, IV, 16, 25, 61, 63, 145, 304, 348, 352, 407,

453, 480; V, 8, 55, 299. A pound in New York currency equaled \$2.50.

<sup>3</sup> *E. g.*, see p. 6.

newly started Public Library, thus at last identifying his name with the object so long his heart's desire. But there can be found no evidence to prove that he had ever returned to America, while there *is* evidence that points to his having died in London prior to 1723.<sup>1</sup> One might think that Mrs. Martha J. Lamb, the historian, not merely as a careful investigator would have discovered the person first named as "Library Keeper," but would have been only too ready to publish his name, which was — Alexander Lamb.

This individual, of whom very little is known save that he later served on the city watch, began in November, 1734, a term of eight years as "Keeper of the Library," at a salary of £3 (\$7.50) per annum till raised to £4 (\$10) in 1737.<sup>2</sup> What his duties were, to merit this not excessive allowance, we do not know; but doubtless, to judge from later regulations, he was required, besides keeping the room and shelves in order, to be present in the "Library Room" for a short time once or twice a week to give out or to receive books. As the very title implies, however, one did not need to be a man of great literary intelligence simply to be a "Keeper."

Before Mr. Lamb's appointment, the Rev. Richard Charlton, assistant at Trinity Church, had in June, 1733, been granted by the Common Council "Liberty to make A Key to the Library of this City for his own use, and none Others, he promising to make a Catalogue of the Said Library, and properly to place the Books therein, thereby to Render the same more Easy to be found and more usefull, he also promising not to suffer any Books whatsoever to be taken from thence without the direction

<sup>1</sup> See p. 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, IV,

304, 305, 348, 407, 453, 480; V, 8, 55, 83, 299.

17<sup>th</sup> April 1779

To the Honourable the House of Representatives of the  
City of New York in General Assembly convened

at Speaker

W<sup>th</sup> the Mayor Recorder Aldermen and Assistants of the  
City of New York convened in Common Council are very thankful  
for the message sent down to us by the Honourable House concerning  
a proper Repository for the Library of the Reverend Dr Middelton  
GIVEN to this Province by the Honorable the Society for propagation of  
the Gospel. It is truly sensible of the great Advantages which  
may arise from a generous and judicious proposal, and we are  
generously disposed to receive the same, and in Obedience we do  
hereby to provide a large Room for their Accommodation which shall  
be at any time hereafter ready for that purpose; but as we are ignorant  
at present of what becomes the said Library does consist, we cannot  
put that Room into the Repository Order by preparing proper Desks  
Shelves and other Accommodations as we are inclined to do  
his Confirmation and Enjoyment of this favour we hope for from  
the Recommendations and Assistance of his Excellency the  
Governour and the Honourable House and we will not be wanting  
on our parts to improve the same. Dated at the City Hall the twenty  
seventh day of June in the third year of his Majesty's reign Anno -  
Domini 1779

Rob<sup>t</sup> Livingston

Chas: Rorier

John Cugor

Philip Corland

Geo: Dickinson

Govard Sharpesent

Lyttle Rutgers

John J. G. G. G.

Govard. Hunt

Govard van der Hoff

Govard L. Rip

and Licence of this Corporation."<sup>1</sup> There has survived no copy of this catalogue (if it was ever printed), nor any evidence to prove that it was actually prepared. Previous to this entry the only reference to the subject occurs under date of July 13, 1732, when one Cornelius Lodge, a whilom city collector and surveyor, was ordered paid £5 "for attending and Cleaning the Books in the Library."<sup>2</sup> This ambiguous passage may be taken to mean that he was its first though transient custodian. To how large an extent the books circulated during these early years there is no means of telling. But that they did circulate is plain enough from subsequent calls for missing volumes.

With the cessation of Mr. Lamb's ministrations in the Library in the fall of 1742, his not over-tempting office was without incumbent for a season. There is nothing to indicate that any additions to the collection had been forthcoming, while in the dozen years of its existence no doubt the more alluring of the worthy Dr. Millington's books had been read, if not re-read, by those who cared for the printed page at all. So a very natural languor fell upon the still youthful institution.

Suddenly in the year 1745 a stir was felt. On April 10th the Common Council was presented with a business-like memorial from an enterprising young man, James Parker, a former apprentice of William Bradford and for the past four years partner of Benjamin Franklin under the terms of a six-year agreement, "for the Carrying on the Business of Printing in the City of New-York."<sup>3</sup> It would seem that Franklin must have been

<sup>1</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, IV, 184.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, IV, 145.

<sup>3</sup> The Articles of Indenture are given in full in the "Proceedings" of the Mass. Hist. Soc. for May, 1903 (as quoted by Worthington C. Ford from the original MS. in the possession of the American Philosoph-

fully cognizant of this new venture, if indeed he had not urged it upon his partner, as would not be at all improbable. Unfortunately, however, their available correspondence begins in September, 1747, after Parker had given up all hope of success with the Library.<sup>1</sup> The preamble of his petition reads as follows:

*Whereas* the Corporation is possessed of a Valuable Library which May be of very Great Use And Service to the Inhabitants of the Province, but More Especially to those of the City, if a Library keeper was Appointed Under proper Regulations, the want of which at present Not only deprives Many persons of the Use of the Said Books, But Subjects the Books to be hurt Or Destroyed by the Dust and paper Worm, WHEREFORE James Parker Printer for this Government Humbly proposes to Take the Care And Charge of the Said Library As Library keeper during the pleasure of the Corporation.<sup>2</sup>

His proposed "Terms and Regulations" are in brief as follows: 1st, to "Compleat a true and perfect Catalogue . . . and Print the Same in a handsome Manner on or before the first day of August next," with "his receipt for the Books therein"; 2d, that he be empowered to loan books at sixpence a week, under certain limitations and penalties, to "persons Resideing within this Government," such "Hirers Entring into a Penalty in Double the Value of Each Book with Security if Required"; 3d, that the extent of loans be between a week and a month, no person to have more than three books at once; 4th, that members of the Common Council "be Entituled to the Loan of any Book Gratis And be pre-

ical Society of Philadelphia). Boston, 1903. 2d series, vol. XVI, pp. 186-189.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 189-232, Letters from

James Parker to Benjamin Franklin, 1747-1770.

<sup>2</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, V, 142.

ferred before all other hirers," but with the same liabilities; 5th, that the new keeper give "Attendance at the Library at a fixed time once a Week for two hours in Order to Let out and Receive the Books"; receive for himself the "Proffitts"; keep the books in repair; and replace lost copies,—all "at his Own Expence without any Charge to the Corporation."

The last consideration expresses aptly the attitude consistently shown by the city fathers toward this potentially valuable asset in their possession. Beyond initial charges of preparing accommodations, and the keeper's wages for a few years, not a shilling appears to have been disbursed toward its maintenance, let alone any attempt at improvement or increase. The application of Mr. Parker was received with favor, as it involved the Corporation in no expenditure and at the same time relieved it of all responsibility. Apparently with little question or discussion, therefore, the Common Council, Mayor Stephen Bayard presiding, agreed to the "Proposals" and tersely ordered that "the Key of the Library be Delivered to the Said James Parker."<sup>1</sup>

As in the case of many another promised work, however, to undertake is one thing and to consummate, another. Over a year passed before the catalogue was advertised. Mr. Parker, besides his public printing, conducted *The New-York Weekly Post-Boy*, established in 1743 as the third city newspaper. The first evidence of his new activity appears in the issue of August 19, 1745, in a notice calling for the return of some ten folio works, naming their titles,<sup>2</sup> "as likewise several others."

<sup>1</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, V, 143.

<sup>2</sup> Howel's *History of the World*,  
The 2d Vol. of Clarendon's *History*,

Hammond's *Paraphrase*, Newman's  
*Concordance*, Wood's *Institutes*,  
Cook's *Institutes*, Hardress's *Re-*



all of which would be "thankfully received, and no Questions ask'd." One of the books, it is interesting to observe, chanced to be "The 2d Vol. of Clarendon's History," which would almost make one think it the identical copy now in the Society Library, were it not for the fact that the latter had already been reposing thirty-three years in the Trinity Parish Library, while the Millington books are stated to have borne the S. P. G. bookplate, besides their former owner's name. The titles given in this instance, as also those of a quarto list similarly printed in October,<sup>1</sup> show that Dr. Millington's library had not been as closely confined to dull doctrinal works as the Bray and Sharpe collections. And yet Smith the historian wrote of the Corporation's books in 1756: "The greatest Part of them are upon theological Subjects." At the same time he gives their number as "a 1000 Volumes," adding: "through the Carelessness of the Keepers many are missing."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, on June 16, 1746, Mr. Parker, having "been at the Charge and Trouble of taking and printing a Catalogue of those Books," advertised free copies "to any Lovers of Reading, that will send and desire the same," thus making the Millington and Sharpe books again available to the public. His "Conditions of Loan" embraced "*Four Pence Half-penny per Week*, for every Book" borrowed, with "Security to return such Book safe and unhurt, at the End of one, two, three or four Weeks." Only one book could be taken at a time, "unless more than one Volume of a Sort." After June

ports, Dalton's Country Justice, Harris's Lexicon, and Whitby's Additions."

<sup>1</sup> "Two Volumes of an Historical and Geographical Dictionary, Tyson's Anatomy of a Pigmic, and

Dryden's Juvenal; as also several others in Octavo and Duodecimo." *The Post-Boy*, Oct. 14, 1745.

<sup>2</sup> William Smith. *History of New-York*. London, 1757. Pp. 194-195.

## 76 . THE LIBRARY IN COLONIAL NEW YORK

24th "due Attendance" was announced to be given "at said Library Room, every Tuesday at 4 o'Clock in the Afternoon."

In January, 1747, the same journal, its name slightly altered to *The New-York Gazette, Revived in the Weekly Post-Boy*,—for old William Bradford had then retired,—thus presented the possibilities of the Library as a winter attraction:

As several Persons have signified their Desire of hiring Books from the Library belonging to the Corporation of this City; but the Time of Attendance being short, and the cold Weather rendering it uncomfortable, they neglect it; this is to give Notice, that on any Person's signifying a Day before-hand what Book they would have, they may at any Time have such Book of the Printer hereof, they giving the usual Security for the same. Catalogues to be had for sending for.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding this very earnest endeavor to renew interest in the palsied Corporation Library, it seems to have listlessly settled once more into inanition. Again it cannot be told when Captain Parker<sup>2</sup>—brave enough in the face of human foes—was forced to yield to the deadly bayonet of atrophy, due both to the staleness of the unimproved collection and to the still prevalent literary indifference.

This next period of prostration, however, came sooner to an end, with the founding, in 1754, of the New York Society Library, whose history the present work has been undertaken to set forth. The conditions that led to its establishment and the circumstances of its origin will therefore fittingly appear later on. But it is proper to

<sup>1</sup> No copy is known to exist.

<sup>2</sup> For further particulars concerning James Parker see Charles R. Hildeburn, *Sketches of Printers and Printing in Colonial New York*. New York, 1895. P. 34 et seq.

give here the terms under which the two institutions joined forces. Their resulting unique association for so many years, coupled with the fact that the light of each was extinguished in the storm of the Revolution, has very naturally developed belief that the Society Library was the successor to the older Corporation Library. In a sense it was, but not to the extent of the latter's identity being wholly merged into that of the Society Library, as will now appear.

On September 11, 1754, at a meeting of the first board of Trustees of the new institution, a set of "Proposals" was drafted, whose preamble and resolutions read as follows: "*Whereas* the Corporation-Library hath for some years past been shut up, & the Books contained in it become of little or no advantage to the Public; that the same may hereafter be improved & found beneficial to the Community, *Resolved*," 1st, that the room in the City Hall containing that neglected collection "be appropriated to the Trustees of this Library for the use of the same"; 2d, that such of the former's books deemed "most fit . . . be joined to the same," the Society Library to be "accountable to the Corporation for the same whenever demanded"; 3d, that books judged "of no Service & scarce ever read" be "put up into Boxes to be made for that purpose and secured," to make room for the fresh consignment expected from abroad; 4th, that the Common Council appoint a person to act with a Trustee in taking an inventory of the old store; and 5th, that books of the Corporation Library entrusted to the Society Library "be improved for the public advantage in like manner" as the latter's, "subject in all respects to the same Rules and Regulations."

These proposals were ordered submitted to the city

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authorities by a committee comprising the Hon. John Watts, William Livingston and William Peartree Smith. Unfortunately we are denied the satisfaction of knowing just how the response was phrased, for there is a gap of more than two months in the Common Council minutes at this very interesting juncture. Nor is there any allusion in the Society Library records to such reply; but, inasmuch as Mayor Holland and other members of the Corporation had subscribed to the new project, their consent was no doubt assured in advance. Reliable evidence of a favorable action, however, is found in *The New-York Mercury* for October 21st, wherein "the Proprietors of the New-York Society Library" are notified that its lately imported books had been "placed, for the present, by Leave of the Corporation, in their Library Room in the City-Hall," and that "constant Attendance" would be given "on Tuesdays and Fridays, from the hours of Ten to Twelve." Attached to this notice is a schedule of "The Terms for the Loan of Books," but, as they were established by the Trustees of the Society Library, their consideration will properly be deferred.<sup>1</sup>

While the new Subscription Library is winning applause and support, nothing is heard of the little old collection for some nine years. But that absorption had not taken place, and that the Common Council was bent on maintaining differentiation between the two institutions, is apparent from several entries in the city records. For instance in August, 1768, a warrant was issued to pay Isaac Stoutenburgh, a public overseer, for "the removing of the Citys arms, Library &c from the City Hall."<sup>2</sup> Also the same official was paid regularly for

<sup>1</sup> See p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, VI, 334.

his "Storage of the Citys arms Publick Library &c,"<sup>1</sup> while the City Hall was undergoing repairs. The work proceeded slowly, for not until May, 1765, was the old "Library Room" ordered to be finished "in the most plain and Cheap manner that Can be."<sup>2</sup>

At last, by August, 1765, the books would seem to have been restored to the shelves, for on the 23d the Common Council voted, "upon application of Alderman Hicks," then a Trustee of the Society Library, "that Thomas Jackson be appointed . . . to take Charge of the Corporation Library, and that he attend at the Library Room in the City Hall on Mondays and Thursdays, from half after Eleven oClock in the morning until one, to let out the Books and that he keep an exact account of the Income thereof."<sup>3</sup> He was also requested to have a new catalogue prepared and printed, while a stipend of £4 (\$10) a year was accorded him "for his Trouble." At the same time the rate of loans was appointed to be two shillings a month for a folio, one shilling for a quarto, and sixpence for an octavo "or Lesser Volume." Overdue books entailed a fine of six, four, or two pence a day, according to size.

Continuance of a close relationship between the two institutions is made very plain in this advertisement in the *New-York Gazette; or the Weekly Post-Boy*,<sup>4</sup> for five numbers, beginning September 19, 1765:

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 376, 450.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 418.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 427. A neatly written copy of this minute, signed by City Clerk

Augustus Van Cortlandt, is preserved in the Society Library.

<sup>4</sup> Then printed by John Holt, "late partner with James Parker."

## NEW-YORK LIBRARY.

**T**HIS is to give notice, that the worshipful corporation of the city of New-York, have committed the care of their Library, of near 2000 volumes, (among which are a great many very valuable, antient, curious, and rare books,) to Mr. Jackson, Master of the Academy in the Exchange, who will soon publish a catalogue,<sup>1</sup> with the conditions of lending them out. The trustees of the Society-Library have also appointed him keeper of their Library, consisting of a large well chosen collection of the most useful modern books, with a considerable late addition, of which a catalogue will be speedily published, that the subscribers may stitch in with their former catalogues. A share in this Library is now worth 10 l. 10 s. and is transferable by the subscribers.

Both Libraries are kept in a large commodious room, fitted up for the purpose, at the City-Hall, where constant attendance will be given on Mondays and Thursdays, from half past eleven to one o'clock.

As a sense of the universal benefit of good reading, and of the great want of opportunity of having that otherwise supplied, in this place, has prompted the corporation, and the gentlemen of the Society, to take this method for encouraging it; it is hoped great numbers will improve this advantage, which it is not doubted, Mr. Jackson will exert himself all he can to promote, at the fixed hours of attendance; and also will assist, particularly young gentlemen, at such other convenient hours, as upon application to him, they and he shall agree upon.

The announcement concludes with a request for the return of books borrowed from both Libraries, and with a quotation from Cicero on "Good Reading."

This renewed attempt to arouse interest in books was made coincidentally with the Stamp Act agitation, which was no tame affair in New York. During the

<sup>1</sup> No copy is known to be extant.

stirring decade that ensued, the people evidently were moved to read as well as to make history, for in December, 1771, there suddenly sprang into being another Subscription Library, denominated the Union Library Society. Though its brief career is recounted in a later section, it is pertinent to say here that the Common Council granted the new applicants leave to place their collection in "the Eastermost part of the Room" containing the books of the New York Society Library.<sup>1</sup>

This was in April, 1774. There were now three distinct collections of books in the old Library Room in the City Hall. Still a fourth was added in May, 1776, when the Library of King's College was deposited there on that institution's being turned into a military hospital by the "Rebels." Thus indeed may the city's whole hope of letters be likened to the marketer with all his eggs in one basket; and, alas, the simile continues to the disastrous crash, with but a small portion rescued from the sorry downfall.

The sad story as told by eye-witnesses has often been repeated in print. Of the old Corporation Library, the venerable dean of that little assemblage of books, the "Digest" of the S. P. G. records says: "Sufficient security for peaceful times, it availed not during the Revolutionary War."<sup>2</sup> And in the manuscript journal of the Society appears this abstract of a letter from the Rev. Dr. Charles Inglis, rector of Trinity Church, dated at New York, May 1, 1778:<sup>3</sup>

A library left to the Society in trust by the Rev<sup>d</sup> Dr. Millington in the year 1728, for the use of their Missionaries, and the li-

<sup>1</sup> *Common Council Minutes*, VIII, 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> *Classified Digest of the Records*

*of the S. P. G., 1701-1892.* London, 1893. P. 798.

<sup>3</sup> This letter cannot be found among the S. P. G. papers.

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brary and philosophical apparatus belonging to the College, together with a large Subscription Library, belonging to the Inhabitants, were, after the King's Troops took possession of the City, plundered, sold, and dispersed by our soldiers, before a discovery was made. As soon as the affair came to D<sup>r</sup> Inglis's knowle[d]ge, he applied for redress, a proclamation was issued for returning the books, but not a tenth part of them, and those the least valuable, and the sets broken, were returned. He hath collected into one place, and sorted those that belonged to the several Libraries, and with the consent of the Mayor of the City, hath taken the Millington Library into his own possession. Their amount is about 80 volumes out of 1000; and the most valuable of these are a few that he had borrowed before the troubles, and had preserved with his own books. He begs to know the Society's determination respecting these books—whether they shall be left in their former state, or remain in his possession, or be given to Trinity Church, the Library of which was consumed by the Fire in Sept<sup>r</sup> 1776.

The committee on this communication was "*Agreed* in opinion that . . . the remains of the Millington Library be left in the custody of D<sup>r</sup> Inglis"; whereupon the Society "*Resolved* to agree with the Committee."

Nothing further can be stated positively concerning the little remnant of the collection. When the success of the American cause became certain, Dr. Inglis set sail for Nova Scotia, of which British province he was not long afterward consecrated first Anglican bishop. His private library, which may still have included these surviving volumes, was left to his son John, third bishop of the same diocese. At the latter's death his books were scattered, most of them being taken to England and there sold. Some were given to King's College at Windsor, Nova Scotia, but its librarian has found no books with the name of Dr. Millington inscribed therein. So, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, may



we not fancy a book or two of the long-defunct Corporation Library back again in England, perchance within sound once more of the old vesper bell, given to his beloved church at Stoke Newington by its pious rector, Dr. John Millington.

#### *4. The New York Society Library, founded in 1754*

INASMUCH as succeeding chapters are devoted to setting forth the history of the Society Library, it is unnecessary to give attention to this institution here, further than to indicate its proper place in the chronological series. It is well to state, however, that the Society Library differed radically in its foundation from previous Library movements in New York. It owed existence to no gift of individual, or of associate body, but was the spontaneous outgrowth of a rather general desire for improvement. It was a Subscription Library, public in the sense that any person was welcome to membership at a uniform rate, and its books soon circulated through a fair proportion of the cultivated citizens.

From what has gone before, the claim cannot be substantiated that the Society Library, in its stewardship of the old Corporation Library, actually dates from 1730,—thus holding the distinction of being the oldest<sup>1</sup> Public Library in the country,—or still less truthfully from 1713, when the Sharpe books, now in its possession, were given to found a "Publick" Library. Only by way of analogy, in consequence of its close association with these older collections, may the Society Li-

<sup>1</sup> The term "oldest" is not used at all in the sense of *earliest*.

biary—in the sense in which the Father of Waters, in conjunction with its tributary, the Missouri, is the longest river in the world—be termed the oldest Public Library in the United States.

### 5. *The Library of King's College, 1757–1776*<sup>1</sup>

As elsewhere noted, the founders of the Society Library in 1754 had advanced as a motive for its establishment the hope that a Public Library “may be also advantageous to our intended College.”<sup>2</sup> This not over-confident expectation was probably justified, for not until 1760 was King's College housed in a building of its own. Its little faculty, therefore, as also its scarcely larger body of students, no doubt made glad use of the steadily growing public collection in the City Hall.

Naturally, however, the need of a special reference Library was early felt by the College authorities. But there were no funds to warrant expenditure for books, so it was by gift or bequest alone that a beginning must be made. Nor had their patience long to wait. Like the old Corporation Library, its origin was due to a legacy. By the will of the Hon. Joseph Murray, one of its Governors, as also a member of the first board of Trustees of the Society Library, who died in April, 1757, there was devised to “the Governors of the College of

<sup>1</sup> Sketches of this early collection have appeared in print in the several histories of Columbia College, the latest being in an article on “The Library” by Librarian James H. Canfield, LL.D., in *A History of Columbia University, 1754–1904*.

New York, 1904. P. 437 *et seq.* Material in the present study is based, however, on original sources, some of which have been unavailable hitherto.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 136, 146.

the Province of New York, by whatever name they are called," the residue of his estate, including a fine library.<sup>1</sup> The books were doubtless handed over with despatch, to judge from a notice inserted in the *Mercury* for May 16th, calling for the immediate return of any books borrowed from the testator or his "late lady."



*Joseph Murray Esq*  
of the Middle Temple

Local journals eulogized this early benefactor of the College in highest terms. The *Gazette* of May 2d recounted how, "during the long and extensive Course of his Practice," Mr. Murray had "approved himself a Gentleman of the strictest Integrity, Fidelity, and

<sup>1</sup> Abstract of the will of the Hon. Joseph Murray, Esq. (*Liber* 20, p. 233, of "Wills in the New York Surrogate's Office"), printed in *The*

*Collections of the New York Historical Society for the Year 1896.* New York, 1897. Pp. 165-166.

Honour," and that "by Principle, he was a steady and hearty Friend to the National Constitution, both of Church and State, and frequent in his Attendance on the publick Offices and Ordinances of Religion." The *Mercury* of the same date said of him:

On Thursday last departed this Life, in the 63d Year of his Age, the Honourable JOSEPH MURRAY, Esq; one of his Majesty's Council for the Province of New-York, and the most considerable Lawyer here in his Time; by which Profession he acquired a large Fortune, in such a Manner as justly intitled him to the Character of an honest, upright, judicious Man: As a Counsellor, he gave his Opinion and Advice according to the Dictates of his own Reason, without Favour or Affection; it was the Cause and not the Person that directed his Judgment; and neither Threats [n]or Frowns could make him deviate from what he thought right: His Purse was always open to the true Objects of Charity: He was an excellent Husband, a kind Master, and a true Friend; a most regular Man in all his Conduct; and those Lines in the XVth Psalm, might justly be applied to him. . . .

It seems probable that this beginning of the College Library was deposited temporarily in the Trinity charity school building, for, according to advertisements in the newspapers, President Johnson gave regular instruction to his classes "at the Vestry Room in the School-House, near the English Church."<sup>1</sup> As an assistant minister of Old Trinity, Dr. Johnson was also entitled to unrestricted use of the Parish Library, so that in a sense all the literary resources of the city—such as they were—had been placed at the disposal of the young College.

The next acquisition was likewise a bequest, in most

<sup>1</sup> *The New York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, July 1, 1754.

respects a counterpart of the Millington foundation of the Corporation Library. According to printed records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, for the year ending in February, 1759, it appears that

the Rev. Dr. *Bristowe*, a worthy Member of the Society lately deceased, having by his last Will, bequeathed his Library of near 1500 Volumes to the Society *to be sent to the College of New York, of which Dr. Johnson is President, or to such other Place or Places as the Society should direct*, the Society hath directed those Books to be sent and placed in this College of *New York*, in Approbation of the generous Donor's Design.<sup>1</sup>

*Bristowe*

The Rev. Duncombe Bristowe, D.D., a graduate of Brasenose College, Oxford, had been, at the time of his death in June, 1758, rector of All Hallows, Staining within Aldgate, London, for thirty years. The recipient of various university honors, he also held a supplementary "college living" at Selborne in Hampshire. Public announcement of this bequest—"together with *Sixty Pounds* sterling, to be paid after his Widow's decease"—was made at New York in Weyman's *Gazette* for June 25, 1759.

For some time, however, it looked as if a notice of the benefaction was all the College would receive. In a letter dated February 16, 1760, the Rev. Henry Barclay, second rector of Trinity Church, in behalf of the Governors thanked the Venerable Society "for their resolution to send us the Library, bequeathed by the late worthy Dr Bristow."<sup>2</sup> He says further: "The Library

<sup>1</sup> *An Abstract of the Proceedings of the Society*. London, 1759. P. 61.

<sup>2</sup> *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. II B (1759-1792), pt. I, no. 44.

Room in the College we hope will be in readiness to receive the Books by Midsummer." These hopes were no doubt realized, so far as the Murray books were concerned, for by May the officers and students "began to Lodge & Diet" in the new building, so long the home of the College on Murray street. The attractiveness of the spot chosen, then lying well without the settled part of town, in full view of the Hudson, is attested to by an English visitor, who predicts it "will be the most beautifully situated of any college in the world."<sup>1</sup>

The promised collection had not arrived at the time of the annual meeting of the Governors in May, 1761. Instead, President Johnson read to the board a letter "from the Rev<sup>d</sup> Doctor Bearcroft in which he desires some directions about the Librery of Books given to this Corporation by the late Rev<sup>d</sup> Doctor Bristow." He was thereupon directed to ask Dr. Bearcroft "to deliver the said Librery to M<sup>r</sup> William Neat of London Merchant when he shall chuse to call for them." And Nathaniel Marston, an influential member, was requested to notify Mr. Neat "that as soon as there is a Peace he will call on Doctor Bearcroft for the said Librery and send it over in the best and most reasonable manner he can and to Insure it when shipt."

Owing to a continuance of war and for other reasons, the books had not come by March, 1763; though a committee on "the State and Circumstances of the College," comprising "M<sup>r</sup> Chief Justice Pratt, M<sup>r</sup> Justice Horsmanden, the Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Barclay, Coll<sup>l</sup> De Lancey and the Rev<sup>d</sup> M<sup>r</sup> Auchmuty or any three of them," then re-

<sup>1</sup>The Rev. Andrew Burnaby, D.D. *Travels through the Middle Settlements in North America*. Reprinted in *A General Collection of the Best and Most Interesting Voyages and Travels in All Parts of the World*. Edited by John Pinkerton. London, 1812. P. 737.

ported "a considerable Number of Books in the College Library (the generous Donation of the late Joseph Murray Esq<sup>r</sup>) and a very large Addition soon expected from England, the Donation of Doctor Bristow." It was thereupon deemed "high time, that a Librarian be appointed with a small Salary, and that he be furnished with such Rules and Directions as may tend to the preservation of the Books committed to his Care, and best answer the purposes for which they were bestowed." Accordingly Robert Harpur, "the Mathematical Teacher," became first incumbent of that office at £10 (\$25) a year. He was further ordered to "make a Catalogue of the Books that now are and hereafter may belong to the Library and deliver a Copy thereof to the President of the College and another Copy to the Clerk of this Corporation, and also that he be accountable for the said Books."

Meanwhile, in November, 1762, the Governors had authorized "James Jay M.D. a gentleman of this City Eminent in his Profession, the Honourable George Clarke Esq<sup>r</sup> Secretary and Robert Charles Esq<sup>r</sup> Agent of this Province and Barlow Trecothick & Moses Franks Merch<sup>ts</sup> of London and each of them by himself our Substitutes, for us and in our behalf to Solicit and receive the Donations and Contributions of all such as shall be Generously disposed to favour the advancement of Learning & Virtue in this extensive & uncultivated part of the World."

In the course of the address presented by this commission to the English authorities of church and state, as to the universities, mention of the Library is made in outlining the progress of the institution, as follows: "Thus far encouraged a neat & convenient Edifice is erected,

for public Schools & Lodgings, a small Librerary, with a Mathematical Apparatus provided, and a course of Education begun, under the Direction of a President & two Professors."

In response to this memorial, substantial sums of money were contributed to the College, and its Library received certain specific gifts, for the minutes record that "Sundry Gentlemen at Oxford gave Books whose names are in them." Indeed, President Nathaniel F. Moore enumerates in his historical sketch "many valuable works given by the Earl of Bute and other individuals, and from the University of Oxford, a copy of every work printed at the University Press."<sup>1</sup>

Very likely the commission was also instructed to hasten the shipment of the Bristowe books, for at the May meeting of 1763 Mr. Marston read a letter from the Messrs. Neat & Co., "acquainting him that they had Shipped nine Boxes of Books the Gift of the late Reverend Doctor Bristow to the College which the Governors have received." The arrival of this consignment is chronicled in dignified fashion in the following paragraph from Weyman's *Gazette* of May 16, 1763:

With Pleasure we can inform the Public, from good Authority, that the Governors of King's College, in this City, have received a Donation by the last Vessels from London, of no less than Twelve Hundred Volumes, of valuable, well chosen, and useful Books; being Part of the Library of the late eminent and worthy Divine, Doctor BRISTOWE: The Remainder of his Library, consisting of several Hundred Volumes more, is expected every Day. This generous and noble Present, must afford a singular Pleasure to every Gentleman of Learning

<sup>1</sup> For sources of this statement see (Oxford items), and for Sept. 24th Holt's *Journal*, for July 30, 1772 (London notes).



amongst us, and to all that have the Improvement and Well-being of the rising Generation at Heart: And which with the Library of the late Hon. Joseph Murray, Esq; (a Gift also to the College) are immediately to be placed in the College Library, for the Use of the Students, under proper Restrictions and Regulations. With such essential Helps to Learning, may we not flatter ourselves with the Prospect of soon seeing our Youth, hitherto destitute of a Seminary of Learning, vic with our Neighbours in the Knowledge and Improvement of the Liberal Arts and Sciences? The rising Generation will now enjoy a Blessing our Fore-fathers were destitute of, and reap those valuable Advantages which the generous Donors had in View, by bestowing their Libraries on an Infant College, that has been honoured and promoted by the Legislature, several publick spirited Gentlemen at home and abroad, and which, every Day, becomes more and more deserving the Countenance, Protection, and Assistance of every Person of Rank and Learning amongst us.

It presently appearing, however, that all the books had not been sent, after waiting over a year the board, in October, 1764, directed Mr. Marston "to write to M<sup>r</sup> Neate to enquire what is become of the Remainder of the Library left to the College by Doctor Bristow and to desire him to Ship them as soon as possible upon the best and most reasonable Terms he can."

No answer having apparently been elicited as the months wore away, again, in December, 1765, the second President, Dr. Myles Cooper, and the Rev. Samuel Auchmuty, third rector of Trinity Church, were "desired to write to Doctor Burton the Society's Secretary to enquire what is become of the Remainder of Doctor Bristow's Library given to this Corporation and that he be requested to put them into the Hands of M<sup>r</sup> William Neate in order to be sent over as soon as conveniently may be." The resulting letter, at once despatched by

these gentlemen, and now preserved in the archives of the S. P. G., states that 1000 volumes had been received of "M<sup>r</sup> Neat Merch<sup>t</sup> in London," and requests Dr. Burton, if the remaining books "are still in the Custody of the Society," to "be pleased to order them to Mess<sup>rs</sup> Neat & Pecue Merch<sup>ts</sup>, who are desired to forward them by the first good Opportunity."



*Duncombe Bristowe, D.D.*

This communication evoked at least a reply, which in November, 1766, President Cooper writes he "had not the pleasure to receive before the latter end of August, it having been landed at some distant port." With reference to the missing books he says:

I likewise am much obliged to you, as is the whole Government of the College, for the notice you take of D<sup>r</sup> Auchmuty's Letter and mine, concerning the Library of D<sup>r</sup> Bristowe: tho' we are sorry to find so small a prospect of recovering such a consider-

able number of Books as were left in England when the former part was sent us. But perhaps, Sir, it may be of some Use to us, that you should be informed that y<sup>e</sup> principal remainder of the Books was said to be in the possession of D<sup>r</sup> Bearcroft's Son, who was then out of London; which was given as y<sup>e</sup> Reason why the whole could not be sent us at once. Wherefore [if] it would be in your power, and not attended with too much farther trouble, we should beg of you to make Enquiry of him; and I am persuaded y<sup>e</sup> Application would not be ineffectual.<sup>1</sup>

From still a third letter, similar in purport, it is clear that the long-sought volumes never materialized, for in September, 1767, Dr. Cooper again thanked the secretary "for the Trouble you have been at, in a fruitless Enquiry after the Remainder of D<sup>r</sup> Bristowe's Library."<sup>2</sup>

Besides these important gifts, the College authorities had enlarged the Library by incidental purchases of books from local dealers, Hugh Gaine, Garrat Noel and William Weyman, the first and last of whom were also printers and newspaper editors. Mr. Noel on one occasion prior to 1763 presented "Romain's Ed. of M. Callasio's Hebr. Concordance 4. vol. fol." Another donor named in the Governors' minutes is Bartholomew Crannell, a former city marshal and for a long time overseer of the local watch, who in March, 1770, bestowed "sundry Books to be added to the College Library."

From the occupations of its two chief benefactors, the collection partook largely of a professional character, comprising standard works in law and theology, with the usual proportion of history and the classics, and a sprinkling of science and belles-lettres. Its exact extent there is no means of ascertaining, for no "catalogue" has survived. It may reasonably be estimated at about two

<sup>1</sup> *S. P. G. Letter Book*, vol. III B, pt. ii, no. 319.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 320.

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thousand volumes at least, when the perfidious dispersion took place. The known facts are as follows:

In April-May, 1776, in accord with a demand "from a Number of Men who stiled themselves the *Committee of Safety*,"<sup>1</sup> the College building was given up to the use of the patriot troops, all academic exercises were suspended, and the books and apparatus removed to the City Hall. There they were probably deposited in the old Library Room, then sheltering the Corporation Library (presumably including the Sharpe Collection), the Society Library and the Union Library Society. A few months later came the cataclysm, when all alike suffered disruption and other indignities.

Two eye-witnesses of this vandalism have left on record what they beheld. John Pintard affirms that the British soldiers were in the habit of carrying off the books in their knapsacks and bartering them for grog. Judge Thomas Jones, though of strongly loyal sympathies, thus unsparingly draws aside the curtain on the shameful scene:

Upon General Howe's entry into New York in September, 1776, the soldiers broke open the City Hall, and plundered it of the College Library, its Mathematical and Philosophical apparatus and a number of valuable pictures which had been removed there by way of safety when the rebels converted the College into a hospital. . . . I saw in a public house upon Long Island nearly 40 books bound and lettered, in which were affixed the arms of Joseph Murray, Esq., under pawn from one dram to three drams each. . . . All this was done with impunity, publicly, and openly. No punishment was ever inflicted upon the plunderers. No attempts were made by the British Commanders to obtain restitution of the stolen goods, nor did they ever discounte-

<sup>1</sup> From "The Matricula" of King's College.

nance such unjustifiable proceedings, by issuing orders condemning such unmilitary conduct, and forbidding it in future.<sup>1</sup>

Though our author here denounces his own side, and in no gentle terms, he is yet in error with regard to his last charge, as will presently appear. Writing as he did in England, upwards of ten years after the perpetration of these outrages, memory may well have played him false, the Attainder Act of 1782 preventing him from verifying recollection or securing correct information. As a matter of fact no fewer than four proclamations were issued by his Majesty's military representatives, their language testifying unmistakably to a high regard for law and order. The first of these was published in *Gaine's Gazette and Weekly Mercury* for February 3, 1777, as follows:

### PROCLAMATION.

**I**NFORMATION having been made to Major-General ROBERTSON, that the Library of King's College, and of the Society Library in the City of New-York, have been pillaged, as well of the Books as of Part of the Philosophical Apparatus. PUBLIC NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN, that in the Books belonging to the College is placed either the Arms of the College, or of the Society for propagating the Gospel, and in some of them the Arms of Joseph Murray, Esq; and that in the Books of the City Society Library, is placed the Arms of the said Society, or that the several Books so pillaged are otherwise so marked, that no one can be ignorant to whom they respectively belong. And all Persons in whose Hands any of the said Books or Apparatus now are, by whatever means they came into their Possession, are hereby strictly ordered, within TEN DAYS, to deliver the same to the Printer hereof, for the Use of the respective Pro-

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jones. *History of New York during the Revolutionary War*. Edited by Edward F. deLancey. New York, 1879. I, 136.

prietors, or they will be committed to the Provost,<sup>1</sup> and punished as Receivers of stolen Goods.

*New-York, 27th January, 1777.* JAMES ROBERTSON.

P R O C L A M A T I O N.

**I**NFORMATION having been made to Major General PIGOT, that the Library of King's College, and the Society Library in the City of New-York, have been pillaged, as well of the Books as of Part of the Philosophical Apparatus, of the natural and anatomical Curioities, &c. PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given, That in the Books belonging to the College, is placed either the Arms of the College, or of the Society for propagating the Gospel; and that in the Books of the City Society Library, is placed the Arms of the said Society; or that the several Books so pillaged, are otherwise so marked that no one can be ignorant to whom they respectively belong. And all Persons in whose Hands any of the said Books or Apparatus, &c. now are, by whatever Means they came into their Possession, are hereby strictly ordered within *One Month*, to deliver the same to the Reverend Mr. Houseal, Minister of the ancient Lutheran Trinity-Church, living in Little Queen-Street, at No. 10; of this City, for the Use of the respective Proprietors; or they will be committed to the Provost, and punished as Receivers of stolen Goods.

NEW-YORK, 26th March, 1777.

R. T. PIGOT.

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Proclamation (facsimile size) by British commander for return of King's College and Society Library books, plundered from City Hall. From Hugh Gaine's *The New-York Gazette*; and the *Weekly Mercury*, March 31, 1777. See pp. 95-97, 194-195.

A similar notice, signed by Major-General Pigot, appeared in the same newspaper for March 31st, when the

<sup>1</sup>The old debtors' prison, used by the British to incarcerate "rebels." Standing a little to the south-east of

the present City Hall, it was long known as the Hall of Records until taken down in 1902-1903.

period in which missing books must be returned was extended to "*One Month*."<sup>1</sup> Their recipient this time was to be "the Reverend Mr. Houseal, Minister of the ancient Lutheran Trinity-Church, living in Little Queen-Street, at No. 10, of this City."<sup>2</sup>

Just how many volumes were restored in response to these commands, there is no knowing. An earlier request for their return had been inserted in the *Gazette and Mercury* for several weeks in October and November, 1776, by Samuel Clossy, M.D., who held the professorship in anatomy, as follows:

**I**F any person into whose hands part of the College apparatus or books, which were deposited in the City-Hall in May last, or any of Dr. Clossy's books, which were deposited in the closet near the organ loft in St. Paul's, will bring them to the doctor, at the house where Dr. Bard lately lived, the favour will be very gratefully acknowledged; and whatever trouble or expence such person may have been at in carrying such instruments or books, the doctor will very gratefully pay them for.

The allusion in this notice to a deposit of books in Old St. Paul's at once suggests the extract already quoted from President Moore on page 36, that "of the books recovered, six or seven hundred volumes were so, only after about thirty years, when they were found, with as many belonging to the N. Y. Society Library, and some

<sup>1</sup> These proclamations were also printed in German in the same columns, entitled "Eine Öffentliche Bekanntmachung," and signed "Von Heister," the Hessian commander.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Bern(h)ard Michael Houseal, D.V.M., was pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, corner of Broadway and Rector street, from 1770 to 1783. A man of imposing personality, culture and eloquence,

he was a Governor of King's College and of the New York Hospital. An ardent loyalist, he left for Nova Scotia when the British evacuated the city in November, 1783. D. Johann Ludewig Schulze. *Nachrichten von den vereinigten Deutschen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Gemeinden in Nord-America, 1787*. Allentown, Pa., 1886. P. 634 et seq.

belonging to Trinity Church, in a room in St. Paul's Chapel, where, it seemed, no one but the Sexton had been aware of their existence, and neither he nor any body else could tell how they had arrived there."

Whether the miscellaneous assortment was actually protected all those years by a stoned-up doorway,<sup>1</sup> there is a reasonable doubt, partially confirmed by a contemporary statement in print that the books "were not forgotten, as reported, but have been visited frequently by Bishop Provoost and others."<sup>2</sup> So interesting is the announcement that finally focused attention on the long-neglected tomes, that it should be seen in full as it caught the eye of readers of the *Morning Chronicle* on December 13, 1802:

COMMUNICATION.—A report prevailed a day or two past of a *splendid library* having been found in a part of the chancel of St. Paul's church by the workmen employed in preparing a place for the organ. It was supposed to have originally belonged to Columbia College, and to have been locked up and *forgotten* ever since the revolution. On investigating the matter, however, it was found to be merely a *hoax*, invented by some wag to *quiz the natives a few*. The report had gained so much by travelling that it was said a librarian was discovered with the library, who, on coming out into the city, was quite surprised with the changes that had taken place!!<sup>3</sup>

Although this quasi-resurrection was labeled "a hoax" by the witty contributor, and despite editorial explanation next day that the "two thousand volumes" in question were "the remains of a library presented by

<sup>1</sup> See page 36.

<sup>2</sup> The *Morning Chronicle*, N. Y., Dec. 14, 1802.

<sup>3</sup> Apropos of this last witticism, the *Morning Chronicle* remarked

editorially next day: "The part of the report concerning a librarian's having been discovered with them, though *probable enough*, is a mistake."



different persons to Trinity Church, many years since"; nevertheless, that among them were certainly some survivors of the old King's College collection is proven, not merely by President N. F. Moore's later assertion, but according to minutes of the Trustees of Columbia College. On August 1, 1803, President Benjamin Moore "presented a Letter from Valentine Nutter<sup>1</sup> respecting the Books lately found in St Paul's Church; which, being read, was committed to the Treasurer to consider & report."

No further reference to the subject is found in the Trustees' records, the long-missing volumes doubtless being returned with little parade to their former repository, whose name had in the meantime been changed to Columbia College. And to-day the great Library of Columbia University cherishes among its treasures a handful of books known to have formed a portion of the King's College collection. A few of them still bear the elegant "arms" of the Hon. Joseph Murray, Esq., "of the Middle Temple," while others are adorned with the bookplate of the Rev. Dr. Duncombe Bristowe, as also with the ancient emblem of the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A large landholder in upper Manhattan, for years a warden of St. Michael's parish. Before and during the Revolution there had been a prominent "bookbinder" of that name in the city, "opposite the Coffee-House" in Broad street.

<sup>2</sup> There is in the Library of the General Theological Seminary a single folio volume, once a part of this collection, *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion* . . . By the Rev. Edward Stillingfleet, D.D. London, 1681. It is in excellent condition and con-

tains perfect copies of both S. P. G. and Bristowe bookplates. Cf. p. 37. On the fly-leaf of a survivor of the collection (now in the Columbia Library), a copy of Thomas Hutchinson's *History of the Colony of Massachusetts-Bay* (Boston, 1764), is written: "The Gift of The Rev'd Mr Jeremy Condy, of Boston, to the Library of King's College in New York. Novr 1766." This gentleman, "well esteemed among his associates" (*Memorial History of Boston*), was pastor of the First Baptist Church, 1739-1768.

100 THE LIBRARY IN COLONIAL NEW YORK

To the man of sentiment these antiquated and now unread books are very appealing, not alone as representing the earliest College Library in the province of



New York, as also the noble aim of enlightened donors, but as being tangible, eloquent evidence of that old Library, which, in helping to mold the youthful minds of such men as Egbert Benson, Robert R. Livingston, John Jay and Alexander Hamilton, has fairly earned the reverential regard of a nation.

6. *Booksellers' Circulating Libraries, 1763-1776*

As is only too well known, New York was lamentably behind its Puritan neighbors in an appreciation of the printed page. William Bradford, who introduced printing to the Knickerbockers in 1693,<sup>1</sup> would seem to have been also the first local dealer in books. In this line he had no competitors for over a generation, for, according to an English visitor in 1719, there was then "but one little Bookseller's Shop" in New York city, whereas the Boston Exchange was "surrounded with Booksellers' Shops, which have a good Trade." In fairness to the former, however, should be quoted his further comment that there was "in the Plantations of Virginia, Maryland, Carolina, Barbadoes, and the Islands, none at all."<sup>2</sup>

These statements are corroborated by Dr. Franklin, who has recorded that about the year 1725 "there was not a good bookseller's shop in any of the colonies to the southward of Boston." He observes wittily that the printers of New York and Philadelphia, in offering for sale "only paper, etc., almanacs, ballads, and a few common school-books," "were indeed stationers."<sup>3</sup>

Following Bradford in succession came John Peter Zenger, James Parker and Hugh Gaine, all noteworthy names in the history of metropolitan printing and journalism. From the character of their calling they nat-

<sup>1</sup> Printing was begun in Cambridge, Mass., in 1639, by Stephen Daye. Pennsylvania came second of the colonies, with Bradford's press at Philadelphia in 1685.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Neal, A.M. *The History*

*of New-England*. 2d edition, London, 1747. Vol. II, p. 225.

<sup>3</sup> *The Complete Works of Benjamin Franklin*. Edited by John Bigelow. New York, 1887. Vol. I, pp. 167-168.

urally were booksellers also. So far as has been ascertained, however, none of these individuals—nor contemporary lesser lights in the typographical firmament—appears to have essayed a Circulating Library, already a well-established English institution, one having been in operation in London as early as 1674.<sup>1</sup> The nearest approach to anything of the kind was, it will be recalled, James Parker's vain though brave attempt in 1745 to manage the Corporation Library with a view to personal profit.<sup>2</sup> The actual inauguration of this branch of commercial activity in New York was reserved for a bookseller who was never a printer at all,—Garraat Noel.

The pedigree and early years of this enterprising and useful citizen must be left for future research to tell. He was well in his prime when, in March, 1753, he was registered a freeman of the city under the appellation of "Schoolmaster."<sup>3</sup> Not finding this occupation sufficiently lucrative, however, in May of the same year he opened a bookstore in Dock, now Pearl, street, near Coenties market, "at the Sign of the Bible," where he advertised for sale, besides "Books, Stationary, &c.," "a fresh Parcel of the right Tooth Powder, and Stoughton's famous Bitters."

He prospered to such an extent that in August, 1763, he felt able to embark in a semi-commercial, semi-literary venture hitherto untried in New York, and which, strange to say, had not yet been undertaken in Boston.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Francis Kirkman, author and bookseller (b. 1632), combined with his regular business "that of a circulating library, his specialty being plays, poetry, and romances." (*Dict. Natl. Biog.*)

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 72-76.

<sup>3</sup> List of "Burghers and Freemen, 1675-1866." *N. Y. Historical Society Collections for 1885*. P. 177.

<sup>4</sup> See article by Charles K. Bolton, "Circulating Libraries in Boston, 1765-1863," in *Proceedings of the Colonial Society of Mass.*, Feb.,

The idea may have been suggested to him with force at that particular time by the temporary closing of the Corporation Library on account of repairs to the City Hall—a suspension which must have been shared in some measure by the Society Library. At all events, he took advantage of the situation and issued in the newspapers this announcement, here taken from Weyman's *The New-York Gazette* for August 29th:

To those who delight in Reading, And would spend their Leisure Hours, and Winter Evenings, with Profit and Entertainment, THIS IS TO GIVE NOTICE, that this Day is opened by GARRAT NOEL, Bookseller next Door to the Merchants Coffee-House, A CIRCULATING LIBRARY; Consisting of several Thousand Volumes of choice Books, in History, Divinity, Travels, Voyages, Novels, &c.

A Catalogue of the Books, with the Conditions of subscribing, may be seen at said Noel's Store.—Where are SOLD all Sorts of Books and Stationary Ware: And Country Stores, and Chapmen, are supplied, Wholesale and Retail, on the very lowest Terms.

Said NOEL has likewise to sell, the very best of Durham Flour of Mustard, and a fresh Parcel of very fine Snuff, commonly called Black Guard.

In the same journal for September 12th following, Mr. Noel proclaims a large addition to the Library, justifying his enterprise on the ground that "sundry Gentlemen" had "for a long Time been desirous of seeing such a Thing established in this City," and that

1908, pp. 196-207. And even a few months before Garrat Noel's venture, George Wood, bookbinder and stationer in Charleston, S. C., advertised his intent "to set on foot A CIRCULATING LIBRARY" for "Gentlemen and Ladies that approve this

plan." (*South Carolina Gazette*, March 5-12, 1763.) For mention of other Circulating Libraries in the colonies, see Charles Evans' monumental and invaluable *American Bibliography* (Chicago, 1903), vol. 4, p. x.

many persons had "given their Approbation by subscribing to the One now on Foot." The "Conditions for subscribing," he trusts, "will not, for the Present, be tho't unreasonable, as the Books are all new, the Number already very considerable, and will be constantly increasing, especially by all the new published Books, Pamphlets, Magazines, and Reviews, &c." The "Conditions" were as follows:

1. Each Subscriber to pay Five Dollars a Year, viz. Two Dollars on subscribing, and One Dollar at the Beginning of each Quarter afterwards.

2. No Subscriber to take above one Book at a Time out of the Library.


3. Any Subscriber losing or spoiling a Book, shall pay the full Price of it, or the Set, taking the Remainder.

NOTE,—Books will be delivered out of the Library any Time, except Sundays, and after Store is shut.

The institution seems to have maintained itself, though with little or no advertising, for Weyman's *Gazette* on October 8, 1764, announces it as "now opened for the second Year, with the Addition of several Hundred Volumes of choice Books." There is significance, however, in the statement that those "pleased to become Subscribers" might "read a whole Year at the easy Rate of *Four* Dollars"!

Noel's Library continued to exist until the fall of 1765, at least. In August of that year the Common Council, it will be remembered, again had a spasmodic realization of the latent value of its Public Library, and, on the restoration of the City Hall, appointed Thomas Jackson to take charge of the old Corporation Library in conjunction with his duties as Librarian of the

Society Library.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Noel was moved by this action to append a note to his regular advertisement in Holt's *The New-York Gazette; or the Weekly Post-Boy*, for September 5th and 12th, as follows:

 The Subscribers to NOEL's circulating Library are hereby informed, that there is an Addition made of several new Books, and more expected for their entertainment, and of those who shall think proper to become encouragers of this useful undertaking.

Again, on September 19th, in the very issue of this same paper that first proclaimed the anticipated renaissance of the "NEW-YORK LIBRARY,"<sup>2</sup> there was put forth a more elaborate address, containing the same terms of subscription as the year before, and a statement of catalogues "to be had gratis."<sup>3</sup> Here, after an array of titles of recent importations, comprehending "a vast Variety of all Sorts of BOOKS," the public was informed of the continuance of the Circulating Library, "with a large Addition of choice BOOKS, particularly those that have been lately published."

This notice appeared in the next number of Holt's *Gazette* for the second and last time. Apparently Mr. Noel abandoned his project as profitless, especially in competition with a natural stir over the renovated collections in the City Hall, which represented more distinctly a public movement. So he devoted himself thereafter to heralding new or seasonable publications and to other details of his regular business. The follow-

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 79-80.

<sup>2</sup> See p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> No copies of his Circulating Library catalogues are known to be extant. They were probably printed by Gaine, who published catalogues

of Noel's stock-in-trade in 1755 and 1762. See *The Journals of Hugh Gaine, Printer*. Edited by Paul Leicester Ford. New York, 1902. Vol. I, pp. 94, 110.

ing week, for example, he advertised a work of current import in that exciting Stamp Act year, "Oppression, a Poem, by an American, with Notes by a North Briton. Occasioned by the Grievances of the Times." Besides books and "stationary," he sold cutlery, patent medicines and miscellaneous articles, including at one time "extraordinary good Violins and Flutes, with an Assortment of New Music,"<sup>1</sup> and again "a few extraordinary good Temple Spectacles, with Brazil Pebble Eyes, set in Steel and Silver, double Joints, in very neat Cases, from Three to Five Pounds per Pair."<sup>2</sup>

Without saying more of his "general Assortment of Books" than that it comprised standard English works of the day, the subjoined extract from a newspaper insertion will prove of interest, as showing the attention he paid to juvenile tastes:

And what should not be forgot, A very large Parcel of Mr. Newberry's beautiful gilt Picture Books, for the Entertainment of his old Friends the pretty Masters and Misses of New-York, at Christmas and New-Year;—Amongst them they will find, The History of Giles Gingerbread, Esq; The History of Goody Two Shoes. Nurse Trueloves Christmas Box and New Years Gift. The Easter, Whitsuntide, and Valentine Gifts. The Fairing or Golden Toy. The Little Lottery Book. Be Merry and Wise. Master Tommy Trapwits Jest. Poems for Children Six Feet high.—Royal Primmer, Royal Battledore, &c. &c. &c.<sup>3</sup>

After the lapse of fully three years, however, the project was revived "upon a very extensive Plan." So promises an advertisement in Mr. Noel's characteristic

<sup>1</sup> John Holt's *The New-York Journal, or General Advertiser*, Dec. 18, 1766.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, July 7, 1768.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Dec. 18, 1766.



style in Holt's *Journal* for September 1, 1768. It was to open on October 1st at the same place, when the "Terms" would be divulged to any "inclined to subscribe." The notice closes with a request that those having books "belonging to the former Circulating Library" should "return them forthwith, or it will be expected that they will pay for them, agreeable to the Articles."

So far as has been ascertained, this effort was fruitless and was the last attempt made by Mr. Noel to conduct a Circulating Library. For nearly a decade longer he continued business "in his usual Way," as a press notice phrased it. In April, 1771, he admitted to partnership Ebenezer Hazard, the firm, as "Noel and Hazard, Booksellers," for some years occupying his old station, "Next Door to the Coffee-House." In the spring of 1776 they were located "At the Post-Office," in Broad street.

Throughout his sojourn in New York, Garrat Noel had been very intimately identified with the historic First Presbyterian Church. Its old manuscript records plainly reveal not merely his membership and that of "Experience his Wife," but also his constant services, as a trustee for the years 1757 and 1758, and thereafter as an elder until his death. He also held the treasurership from November, 1767, to May, 1773, besides acting as "Stated Clerk of the Session" from the former date until January, 1774, when he resigned "by Reason of Infirmary."

Not long afterward he removed to Elizabethtown, New Jersey, where he died, September 22, 1776, in his seventieth year. His long-time fellow-citizen, Hugh Gaine, not content with saying that he was for "many

years an eminent bookseller, in the city of New-York," adds in evident sincerity: "He was a kind husband, and tender parent, and justly esteemed and beloved by all that knew him."<sup>1</sup> His love for books would seem to have come by inheritance to his grandson, Anthony Bleecker,—son of Mary Noel and Anthony Lispenard Bleecker,—a recognized man of letters of his day, and who for the last seventeen years of his life was an active member of the board of Trustees of the New York Society Library.

But before Garrat Noel left New York, another attempt was made to establish a Circulating Library there. More than five years elapsed, however, between the last-mentioned advertisement of Mr. Noel's enterprise and the initial announcement of his successor. At length there came to the front a person of the requisite daring, Samuel Loudon, a Scotchman by birth and a ship-chandler for some years after his arrival in the city, about 1760. In the early seventies he became a bookseller, and meeting with success decided to see what more might be accomplished by opening a Circulating Library in connection with his regular business. Accordingly he advertised in *Rivington's New-York Gazetteer* on December 30, 1773, as follows:

*Samuel Loudon's  
Circulating Library*

**W**ILL be opened the first day of January 1774; subscriptions for reading, are taken in at his house, at 20 shillings per annum, half to be paid at subscribing. Occasional

<sup>1</sup>*The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury. Printed at New-York, in East-New-Jersey. Saturday, Sept. 28, 1776.*

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readers to pay by the week, or volume; the prices for which, with rules for reading, will be particularly affixed to the catalogue, which is now printing, and will be ready to deliver to the subscribers, and other readers, next month.

The design is set on foot at the desire of several very respectable inhabitants, and shall be conducted with all possible fidelity and diligence, in providing books, both instructive and entertaining, and written by authors of the most established reputation. It is hoped that all who approve of the undertaking, will do their utmost to encourage it, and without delay, as every body may see that it's existence and perfection, depends on the encouragement it meets with, by enabling the undertaker to provide, and keep in order, a sufficient number of valuable books. .

A few weeks later, in *Gaine's Gazette and Mercury* for January 24, 1774, the catalogue was announced, "ready to be delivered to the subscribers, *gratis*." This would "shew a neat collection of books; to which the proprietor will be making additions by every opportunity of every new literary production of value." Meanwhile, those persons "willing to countenance the undertaking" were requested "to be speedy with their subscriptions."

In the same paper for November 21st following, Mr. Loudon advertises a new catalogue, the collection having increased to "upwards of a thousand volumes." The proprietor takes pleasure in informing "all such connoisseurs," as disparaged female intelligence and love of reading, that "the ladies are his best customers, and shew a becoming delicacy of taste in their choice of books." Lest this should arouse feeling, he hastens to add: "Neither are the gentlemen deficient in shewing the ladies a laudable example in this respect." The "prices for reading," payable in advance, were:

## 110 THE LIBRARY IN COLONIAL NEW YORK

A year 20 shillings.

Half a year 12 shillings.

A quarter 8 shillings.

And occasional readers to

pay one penny for each shilling

the book they read is valued at.

The library open every week day, from morning till night.

And, from a "sketch of the rules," non-subscribers were

. . . to pay when each book is delivered, to give a note for the value of the book they receive, if required,—one book to be returned before another is delivered, the time allowed to read an octavo volume is one week, a quarto two weeks, and a folio four weeks,—readers in the country to be indulged with two or three volumes at a time, to be sent and returned (at their own risque and charge)—Books to be paid for if lost or abused.—Books are not to be lent by the subscribers.

A notice in *Holt's Journal* for February 23, 1775, reports "the addition of several hundred volumes," quoting a few attractive titles and adding, no less alluringly: "Novels, a variety; History, a considerable number; and sundry miscellaneous pieces." The proprietor promises that a "Supplement to the Library Catalogue" will soon appear, and that "every opportunity in his power shall be improved to increase the variety and number of useful Books, that his Library may be rendered more and more a lasting friend of knowledge and entertainment." The regulations continued the same, with these slight improvements, indicative of popularity: "The Library is open from morning to eight at night, and the Readers may have a Book exchanged if they please, every day, by their very humble servant, SAMUEL LOUDON."

Mr. Loudon must have been "encouraged" appreciably, for in January, 1776, he further extended his activities to include the publication of a weekly newspaper, *The New-York Packet, and the American Ad-*

*vertiser*. In a brief address he thanks the public for assurances of support, and presents "the compliments of the season to his kind Customers; wishing, that the year 1776 may be the happy *Æra*, in which Peace and Union, on a Constitutional Basis, shall be concluded between Great-Britain and her Colonies."

That his Circulating Library had also flourished is inferable from a notice in this same first number of his own paper, that it was "increased to upwards of Two Thousand Volumes." He again promised a supplementary list of books for subscribers "to annex with the Catalogue<sup>1</sup> they have already," and in conclusion thus announces a sort of exchange: "Ready money, or new books exchanged for any old library or parcel of books, particularly for history and well chosen novels, for the use of the Library."

This advertisement was renewed regularly until well into March. But the enterprise had not much longer to live. As a commercial venture, pure and simple, it was dependent on its proprietor's attention no less than upon popular "encouragement." In September, 1776, Mr. Loudon, a zealous Whig and patriot, announced his removal to Fishkill, "where the Provincial Congress now reside," in consequence of the city's invasion "by a powerful Fleet and Army."<sup>2</sup> Though he advertised a suspension of the *Packet* "for several Weeks" only, his departure meant the end of the second and last and apparently a successful Bookseller's Circulating Library in Colonial New York.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> No copies of either the catalogue or the supplement are known to be in existence at the present writing.

<sup>2</sup> *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, Sept. 2, 9, 1776.

<sup>3</sup> Before the British had actually

left New York, however, Mr. Loudon resumed business at "No. 5, Water-Street, between the Coffee-House and Old Slip," where he advertised, in his *Packet* of Nov. 13, 1783, "to commence again," in Janu-

### 7. *The Union Library Society of New York, 1771-1776*

WITH the single exception of Garrat Noel's brief attempts to establish a Circulating Library as a commercial venture, the Society Library seems to have had the local field wholly to itself for more than seventeen years. At last, however, a rival appeared upon the scene. In December, 1771, there issued from the press of Samuel Inslee and Anthony Car, "at the New Printing-Office, on Beekman's-Slip," a twelve-page pamphlet, entitled "Articles of the Union Library Society of New-York."<sup>1</sup>

The objects of this new suitor for popular support are thus announced:

**W**HEREAS an advancement in knowledge and literature is a highly laudable pursuit, and attended with many advantages, as well to individuals as society in general; and as the private purchase of books is attended with an expence too heavy for many persons whose inclinations lead them to improvement; and we being sensible that the establishment of a public Library will greatly promote the attainment of so valuable an acquisition, have therefore, and by these presents do unite ourselves into a voluntary association, by the name of the UNION LIBRARY SOCIETY OF NEW-YORK, for the purpose of erecting and continuing a Library, for the benefit of ourselves, and all others who may chuse, upon the conditions prescribed, to become members thereof:

ary, 1784, "at the request of several respectable citizens," "THE CIRCULATING LIBRARY," containing about 2000 volumes. The fact of "the public Libraries of this city being in a great measure lost" made his enterprise "the more necessary and useful at present." Besides, "in point of convenience it had the

preference to the public Libraries, they being open only at certain hours, his at all hours of the day, and proper attendance given."

<sup>1</sup>The only copy known to be in existence is in the Society Library, having been presented by Henry Nicoll, a Trustee, in June, 1838.

Following this preamble come twenty regulations, "obligatory upon every member" and regarded "as a magna charta of the constitution," to be repealed "either altogether or in part" only by a three-fourths majority of the Society. In brief they direct all property of the institution to be held "in common, and not in joint tenancy," each member having the right to assign or devise his share. At the annual meeting, to be held on the first Tuesday in May, a Treasurer and twelve Directors must be chosen, such election to be in charge of a Secretary, "some fit person of the company," with the assistance of suitable inspectors. Vacancies in the directorate or treasurership were to be filled by the board, which was also to elect a President and Vice-President each year. The Directors were to meet on the second Tuesday of each month "at the place where the library shall be kept, or at some other fit place in the city," seven of their number, always including an officer, constituting a quorum; and they were entrusted with the entire management of affairs, even to removing the Treasurer for incompetency or neglect.

As in the case of the Society Library, the annual payment charge was fixed at ten shillings; but the subscription cost of a share or right, it is of interest to note, was the modest sum of twenty shillings, or only a fifth of the price charged throughout those years by the older organization. Penalties for "arrearages" were to be strictly enforced, offenders being "debarred the privilege of taking any book from the library." Each member was to have only one vote, however many shares he might own; and a very radical provision entitled a person holding more than one share to take out no more books than any other member. It is difficult to see in

this last prohibition any inducement to purchase extra shares.

The concluding article is a resolution nominating, "for the immediate putting in execution our useful designs," a list of twelve Directors and a Treasurer, "invested with full power and authority to enter immediately upon their respective offices," as follows: Walter Franklin, Jacob Watson, John Murray, Willet Seaman, Garret Rapalje, Benjamin Hugget, White Matlack, Lindley Murray, John Berrien, William Denning, James Mott and Benjamin Underhill, Directors, and Robert Bowne, Treasurer.

All of these names represent position and influence in the community, particularly among the mercantile element. Walter Franklin, the head of a large importing house, and Robert Bowne, a prosperous retail merchant, were afterwards original stockholders and directors of the Bank of New York, the former having been also a founder of the Chamber of Commerce in 1768, of which institution John Murray was later to become president. Garret Rapalje and Benjamin Hugget were for a number of years assistant aldermen, serving on important committees, in the days when the Common Council had jurisdiction over all departments of municipal administration. Lindley Murray, a member of the colonial bar, will ever be best known by the appellation of "the grammarian." Of the subsequent patriotic and useful career of William Denning, due notice will be taken in chronicling the history of the Society Library, which institution he served as Trustee for fifteen years, long after the Union Library Society had ceased to exist.

The little brochure closes with a clause of agreement and subscription, dated December 8, 1771. Unfortu-



nately the names of subscribers are not included, and it is not for over a year that their number is published. The first newspaper notice of the Society is found in *The New-York Gazette*; and the *Weekly Mercury* for December 30th as follows:

**P**UBLIC NOTICE is hereby given to the Members of the *Union Library Society of New York*, and to all others who may choose to be concerned therein, That the Library Room will be opened at the House of Captain John Berrien, at Burling's-Slip, on Tuesday the Seventh of January next, at 3 o'Clock in the Afternoon of the same Day; where new Subscriptions are taken in, and printed Articles of the Society distributed: The Founders of this Institution flatter themselves with the Prospect of a speedy Advancement of so useful an Undertaking, as they conceive it founded upon Principals of Freedom and general Utility.

By Order of the Directors, JOSHUA WATSON, Sec'ry.

Further particulars concerning the Society are but fragmentary, though informing. The first annual meeting was called for May 5, 1772, "at 4 o'Clock in the Afternoon, at the City-Hall," and a year later this function took place in "the Library Room" at ten in the morning, but the result of neither election was published. In the meantime the only obtainable statement regarding the size of the collection and membership had been proclaimed in the several papers of January, 1773, the books numbering "near 1000 volumes" and "continually receiving new additions," while there were 140 sharcholders. The public was also informed that the subscription price had been advanced to "the small sum of thirty shillings."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *The New York Journal*; or, 1773, and *The New-York Gazette*, the *General Advertiser*, Jan. 14. Jan. 25, 1773.

It thus appears that the newer institution, in membership at least, had gone far ahead of the Society Library, whose charter, recorded two months before, enumerates fifty-nine names. Also, the next reference to the Society reveals a turn of affairs far from pleasing to friends of the older Library. The situation is best described in the simple words of the original source, leaving the rest to the imagination. In the minutes of the Common Council for April 12, 1774, is found this entry:

THE PETITION of the Members of the union Library Society was preferred to this Board and Read, praying that this Board would be favourably pleased to Indulge them with the Eastermost part of the Room in which the books of the New York Societys Library are Contained, and this board having Viewed the Same unanimously agreed that the Same be Granted them, they being at the Expence of a doar, and Making the Partitions required.<sup>1</sup>

By July, the necessary alterations and "doar" having doubtless been made, the Directors published a notice to members that the collection had been "removed to a Room in the Old City Hall, where attendance is given at the usual days and hours."<sup>2</sup> Fortune evidently smiling upon the institution, its terms were again advanced to "forty shillings original subscription money," though ten shillings continued to be the yearly charge. All the newspaper extracts give the name of Walter Franklin as President and show that Robert Bowne continued to serve as Treasurer.

But no lists of Directors or members and no catalogues are known to have been printed, nor, seemingly,

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the Common Council*, VIII, 24-25.

<sup>2</sup> *The New York Journal; or, the General Advertiser*, July 28, 1774.

have any stray volumes survived the Revolution, when the Union Library Society, in company with other Libraries of the city, suffered irretrievable ruin in the

*The Petition of the Members of the Union Library Society was presented to this Board and read, praying that this Board would be favourably pleased to Indulge them with the use of the room in which the Books of the New York Society Library are contained. and this Board having thereupon viewed the same unanimously agreed that the same be granted them. They being at the Expense of rebuilding a door, and making the alterations required*

Entry (reduced) in Common Council minutes, April 12, 1774. See pp. 81, 116.

general dereliction. One valiant but vain attempt, so far as known, was made to rehabilitate the Society some years after the war, as evidenced by the following insertion in *The Daily Advertiser* for December 21, 1791:

**N**OTICE is hereby given to the subscribers of the Union Library, (which was established prior to the late war) that some business of importance, requiring attention, they are requested to meet on the evening of the 23d inst. at six o'clock, at Crosbie's Tavern, in Water street, between Peck and Beckman slip, where punctual attendance is desired.

JOHN MURRAY,  
In behalf of the Trustees.

The meeting, if held, was not reported in the papers, so that all hope of a restoration or renewal was prob-

ably abandoned. Thus all that remains to-day to bear witness to a once prosperous Library is the little old discolored prospectus of the Union Library Society, now treasured by its successful rival, the New York Society Library.

### *Summary and Conclusion*

BRIEFLY reviewing the history of the efforts to establish an institutional Library in Colonial New York, we find that no fewer than six attempts were made toward that end, exclusive of the purely commercial Circulating Libraries, as follows:

1. The Trinity Parish Library, founded in 1698 by the Bishop of London through the instrumentality of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Bray, and reënforced by small additions from the same sources and by later private donations. So far as the vestry minutes reveal, on its almost complete destruction by fire in 1776, it could hardly have comprised over 450 volumes, some of which were saved. The only books of this collection known to have survived are now in the Library of the General Theological Seminary, with the single exception of the old Clarendon history, preserved in the Society Library.

2. The Sharpe Collection, given in 1713-1715 by Chaplain John Sharpe for a "Publick Library." Never securing an independent existence, it remained in the hands of private individuals until (probably) joined with the Corporation Library in 1730. In some way, as above conjectured, the majority of its 238 volumes survived the Revolution and are now to be seen in the Society Library.

3. The Corporation Library, New York's first real Public Circulating Library, originally the private collection of the Rev. Dr. John Millington, an English clergyman, who bequeathed it to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, by which Society the books, numbering 1642 volumes, were given to the city of New York. Arriving in 1730, they were kept in the City Hall, undergoing successive fluctuations of usefulness and desuetude, until scattered by the British troops in 1776.



Label (reduced) on second volume of Clarendon history (1711), now in Society Library. See pp. 20, 62, 118.

4. The New York Society Library, founded in 1754 and incorporated in 1772 as a Public Subscription Circulating Library by a number of well-to-do, enterprising citizens. Receiving immediate and gratifying support, and constantly enlarged by consignments of imported books, it was in a flourishing state when paralyzed by the approach and ravages of war. Practically exterminated by the atrocious vandalism of the British troops, scarcely a volume of its pre-Revolutionary collection is known to have survived save the Sharpe books, which, as part of the Corporation Library, were formerly in its care. Its Catalogue of 1773, the last issued

before the war, enumerates 1201 volumes, increased by later purchases to 1500 at least.

5. The Library of King's College, from its nature scarcely more public than the Parish Library, was established in 1757 through a bequest of the private library of Joseph Murray, Esq. It had received sundry gifts of books from the S. P. G. and other sources up to the time of its removal, in 1776, to the City Hall, where it also met with destruction. Its extent is not known at all, but probably approximated 2000 volumes.

6. The Union Library Society of New York, called into being in 1771, too late to secure a large collection within the succeeding fateful five years, though its advertisement of "near 1000 volumes" bespeaks its energy and growing importance.

Only one printed statement has come down as to the total number of volumes at the time of dispersion, but it is so plainly an exaggeration or a mistake, that it cannot be considered at all seriously as it stands. Justice Jones says that the British soldiers stole from the City Hall, besides the King's College collection, "all the books belonging to the subscription library, as also of a valuable library which belonged to the Corporation, the whole consisting of not less than 60,000 volumes."<sup>1</sup> One of these ciphers must be a typographical error, for 6000 is the more probable figure for the combined assortment.

Of these six collections, then, all were prostrated by the war. Of two of them, the Union Library Society and the Corporation Library, not a vestige has survived. Of two others, the Sharpe Collection and the Trinity

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Jones. *History of New York during the Revolutionary War*. Vol. I, p. 136.

Parish Library, the former is by far the better preserved, but it plainly has never, at any stage of its career, been a working Library, while the latter lives to-day only in a few fragments. The only ones that arose from the ashes of their former selves, the New York Society Library and the King's (Columbia) College Library, were forced to make a wholly fresh start in life, the few relics of their early collections not being restored for many years. A handful of the King's College books are preserved in the Library of Columbia University to-day, while the Society Library can show but two books, besides the Clarendon history and the Sharpe Collection, that are of undoubted Colonial Library ownership.

From this consideration of the Library in Colonial New York, the reader will not turn with any great degree of pride in the general cultural attainments of the capital city of the province, let alone evidences of Library science. And yet the facts of the case belie the statement in Grahame's history already quoted,<sup>1</sup> that "the great bulk of the people were strangers even to the first rudiments of science and cultivation, till the era of the American Revolution." For all through the English colonial period one finds traces of increasing cultivation and refinement. As far back as 1668, Col. Francis Lovelace, the second English governor, is said to have written home: "I find some of these people have the breeding of courts, and I cannot conceive how such is acquired."<sup>2</sup> Still earlier, in 1643, the "Inventory of the personal property of the Widow Bronck at Emaus" enumerates over fifty books and pamphlets, the collection of "the late Jonas Bronck."<sup>3</sup> Moreover, there are in the

<sup>1</sup> *Supra* p. 30.

<sup>2</sup> But see p. 32n2.

<sup>3</sup> *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, vol. XIV, p. 42.

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New York Public Library to-day several volumes that once formed a part of the personal collection of the Rev. John Miller, chaplain at the fort from 1692 to 1695.

Governors Hunter and Burnet were themselves owners of libraries and scholarly in their tastes, while Governor Montgomerie, though not so regarded, left a library of about 1400 volumes.<sup>1</sup> Among the colonists, furthermore, there were all along men of literary appreciation, with their own private collections: for example, Col. Lewis Morris, Robert Elliston, James De Lancey, William Smith, James Alexander, Cadwalader Colden, Joseph Murray, David Clarkson and others.<sup>2</sup> Such was the type of men who not only perceived the permanent value of a Public Library but gave to their ideas enduring embodiment in the form of the New York Society Library, whose history is now to be related.

<sup>1</sup> See notice in *The New-York Gazette* in May, 1732, advertising its sale.

<sup>2</sup> Executors of estates sometimes advertised in the newspapers for the

return of volumes belonging thereto: e.g., John Pintard (the elder) asks for the borrowed books of William Searle, deceased, in *The Gazette and Post-Boy*, Nov., 1747.



## I

### THE FOUNDING OF THE NEW YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY, 1754

**I**N the spring of 1754, when the New York Society Library first drew breath, the position held by what is now the United States in world affairs was truly insignificant. Regarded and treated chiefly as appendages to the British crown, restricted in commerce, and with inventive and mechanical instincts kept in leash, the colonies were indeed but scattered "plantations," clinging closely to the Atlantic seaboard. Numbering all told only about 1,370,000 souls, or less than a third of the present population of New York city alone, the English colonists, furthermore, differed as widely in their institutional life as in their geographical location. Yet in spite of all this and their primitive means of intercourse, the idea of nationality was already beginning to find expression.

Across the water, the reign of old George the Second had still more than six years to run, while America's future "tyrant" was but a lad of fifteen, with traits of temperament all unguessed. On the decaying French throne lolled Louis the Well Beloved, whose ill-starred successor was yet to see the light this same year; and over a twelvemonth was to pass before the tragic name

of Marie Antoinette would become a household term at the Austrian court,—in their very cradles innocent victims of that unnatural state alliance formed to crush the great Frederick. All Europe was taking a moment's breath before plunging into the Seven Years' War, from which Prussia was to emerge a power.

As landmarks in the progress of the arts of peace, it will be recalled that only a year earlier the British Museum had been founded, and that not long afterward Dr. Johnson published his famous dictionary. In the new world, too, significant signs of culture were not lacking. Already four colleges, Harvard, William and Mary, Yale, and Princeton, were in existence; and within a few months still a fifth was to be chartered in close proximity to the new Library—King's College, known ever since the Revolution as Columbia.

The year 1754 is notable in American annals. It marks the outbreak of the fiercest and fortunately the last of the intercolonial struggles, the French and Indian War, whose chief benefits to the English provincials, besides the prestige of final victory, were their experience in coöperation and their training for that sterner and more momentous conflict, of which few had so much as dreamed. At the celebrated Albany Congress, opened in June by Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey, Benjamin Franklin submitted his Plan of Union, so clever that it was rejected by both the colonies and the home government for the advantages supposably given the other side. And it was in an early episode of the war that a young Virginia colonel at Fort Necessity was learning lessons in patience and self-reliance, and undergoing a discipline, that in after years were justly to earn for him the title, "Father of his Country."

None of the colonies showed a bolder front or greater foresight in preparing for this contest than New York. Its energetic executive, James De Lancey, as a native of the province was the better able to discern the various needs and perils of the hour. His recommendations found full favor with the Lords of Trade, who approved his view of New York city, as "in all respects the most proper place for a general Magazine of Arms and Military stores."<sup>1</sup> As it was the provincial capital throughout the colonial era, there consequently existed a close association between the two governing boards. Often the mayor was appointed to the governor's council, whose members frequently mingled with assemblymen and common councilmen in the corridors of the City Hall.

By this time New York may fairly be said to have attained a well-defined organization. Granted a nominal charter by Director Stuyvesant in 1653, the city, ever since the arrival of Governor Andros, in 1674, had been ruled under the English municipal system, with such modifications as changing conditions brought about. A truly distinctive character had gradually come into being from the very composition of the community; in earliest times cosmopolitan tendencies were pronounced, and before the middle of the seventeenth century the city's population was claimed to include well-nigh a score of nationalities. These various elements had fused harmoniously at length, a circumstance serving to counteract that spirit of provincialism so natural to colonial life.

Then, as now, and in fact throughout its history, the chief resource of the city was its commercial acumen. In the words of a contemporary historian, New York

<sup>1</sup> *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, VI, 1016.

was "the Metropolis and grand Mart of the Province," commanding "by its commodious Situation . . . also all the Trade of the Western Part of Connecticut and that of East Jersey." "'No season,'" he quotes, "'prevents our Ships from launching into the Ocean. During the greatest Severity of Winter, an equal, unrestrained, Activity runs through all Ranks, Orders, and Employments.'"<sup>1</sup> Trading monopolies and the rich harvests reaped from privateering had laid the foundations of many a local fortune and had brought prosperity to the city.

But for all that, New York was a smaller place than either Philadelphia or Boston. Barely 12,000 people could be counted within its gates, then not far apart, for little land had as yet been reclaimed from the rivers, while the Fields, the present City Hall Park, lay well outside the inhabited portion.

In those days, as for over half a century before, and for as many years to follow, the City Hall stood in Wall street at the head of Broad. Here were discussed all matters relating to the welfare of the community. It will therefore be of interest to regard briefly the concerns of the city fathers, at a time when no salary but great honor attached to the office of alderman, while to be mayor was accounted an imperishable dignity. For the most trustworthy source of information one should turn to the old minutes of the Common Council, so carefully kept by the city clerks throughout the hundred years ending with the British occupation in 1776.

At a glance, one is impressed with their alertness and attention to civic interests. First in importance at that

<sup>1</sup> William Smith. *The History of the Province of New-York*. London, 1757. P. 188. The author does not give the source of his quotation.

time, naturally enough, would come preparation for suitable defense. Not only were constables paid for "Severall Nights and Days Watchings," but masters of all incoming vessels were notified to report within two hours of arrival the names of strangers carried as passengers, under penalty of forty shillings for each default. A "thousand stand of arms" was ordered from England, each musket to be "fixed with a Bayonet, one Catridge box and a Belt." Again, all freemen were to be taxed for an appropriation of not above £3500 for a new barracks in the Fields, to be built by "the most principall Carpenters," to accommodate 800 men; upon completion it was regularly kept supplied with firewood, candles and straw. As an expedient for raising funds, the Common Council—as had been done in the case of founding King's College—petitioned the assembly for leave to start a lottery, "beeing apprehensive of a Warr with France."

To matters of the general weal a similar devotion seems to have been shown. New streets were laid out from time to time, while some of the travel-worn thoroughfares would be ordered paved or leveled. Fines were exacted of persons refusing to serve in elective positions, a special exception being made in the case of one constable-elect, Caleb Shrieve, "screaned by being a Quaquer." The poorhouse, City Hall and other public buildings were kept in constant repair, and a pest-house and a new jail were in process of erection. One citizen was regularly paid for "taking Care of the City Lamps," another received quarterly instalments for services as "publick Whipper," still a third was designated as "Publick Inviter to ffuneralls,"—this last functionary plainly showing title to Dutch origin.

For over a score of years a fire department had been in operation, the firemen receiving individual appointment from the Common Council. For precaution's sake new wells were sunk in the streets, as had long been the custom, and a special ordinance forbade the storing of turpentine or pitch within the corporate limits.

Frequent regulations attest to the watchfulness of the city's guardians over the health of their charge, stringent laws calling for cleanliness in streets and market places. One ordinance in particular prohibited the selling of oysters between May 15th and the middle of August, thus showing familiarity with the phenomena of the months without the "r"! At a time when small-pox was reported as rampant in Philadelphia, the Amboy boat was ordered held up for inspection, Bedlow's Island being the quarantine station.

In the direction of public charities a beginning had long been made. The city's poor and destitute received attention from regularly chosen church wardens and city vestrymen, officials quite distinct from those of Trinity parish. Physicians were summoned at the Corporation's expense to attend sick debtors or other prisoners in their durance.

There was greater opportunity for simple recreation in those days; people took life more leisurely than in the hurry-worry of the present age. Citizens then had their out-of-door sports close at hand; and their social diversions resembled nothing so much as great family gatherings, for the local gentry were nearly all related, by marriage at least. Political discussions at taverns and coffee-houses were doubtless as convincing as any held to-day, though possibly more moderate, as the practice of dueling tended to set a guard on men's lips. Smith

the historian characterizes New York as "one of the most social Places on the Continent," where "the Men collect themselves into weekly Evening Clubs," and "the Ladies, in Winter, are frequently entertained either at Concerts of Musick or Assemblies, and make a very good Appearance."<sup>1</sup>

For a charming glimpse of the customary round of outings as the seasons changed, behold the following picture from the journal of an English traveler:<sup>2</sup>

Their amusements are . . . balls, and sleighing expeditions in the winter; and, in the summer, going in parties upon the water, and fishing; or making excursions into the country. There are several houses, pleasantly situated upon East river, near New York, where it is common to have turtle-feasts: these happen once or twice in a week. Thirty or forty gentlemen and ladies meet and dine together, drink tea in the afternoon, fish and amuse themselves till evening, and then return home in Italian chaises, (the fashionable carriage in this and most parts of America, . . . ) a gentleman and lady in each chaise. In the way there is a bridge, about three miles distant from New York, which you always pass over as you return, called the Kissing-bridge; where it is a part of the etiquette to salute the lady who has put herself under your protection.

All these forms of enjoyment were of course made possible only by the underlying commercial prosperity. Numerous and powerful as were the merchants of New York, however, there was yet another class of society even more instrumental in lending weight and distinction to the advancing community. The commanding influence of the legal fraternity, in shaping a colonial

<sup>1</sup> William Smith. *History of New-York*. London, 1767. P. 211.

<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Andrew Burnaby, D.D.

*Travels through the Middle Settlements in North America*. Pp. 738-739. See p. 88a.

attitude toward arbitrary policies of the home government during the stirring times then beginning, was as freely admitted by the British ministry as by its agents on this side of the ocean. And the leaders of the New York bar of that day stood second to none in learning, in forensic ability, or in their patriotic breadth of view.

From such a people knowledge was bound to receive recognition. Amongst enterprising men of affairs there were a number of distinctly scholarly minds, besides many others thirsting for literary advantages or plain general information, for themselves and particularly for their families. This instinct had been developed in the case of wealthier citizens to the extent of some notable private collections of books, as already mentioned.<sup>1</sup> To the exclusive cultivation of this spirit, however laudable in itself, may be attributed in some degree the prevailing apathy hitherto shown toward maintaining a Public Library.

Yet from a coterie of these very persons came the impetus and guidance that carried to a successful issue the plan of establishing a Subscription Library. Smith's history tells how "the project was started at an evening convention of a few private friends," with the aim of "promoting a spirit of inquiry among the people."<sup>2</sup> As likely as not the little gathering was held at the home of the Hon. James Alexander, a renowned place of meeting to discuss current affairs. The same printed source gives likewise the names of these conspirers for good as follows: Philip Livingston, William Alexander, Robert R. Livingston, William Livingston, John Morin Scott, "and one other person." This last, with a rea-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> William Smith. *The History of the Late Province of New-York.* New York, 1830. Vol. II, p. 907.



sonable amount of certainty, may be pronounced to have been the author himself, for William Smith, Jr., was boon companion to several of these men, and he manifestly writes as one having authority.

Their ultimate and liberal aim, our chronicler adds, comprehended "an incorporation by royal charter and the erection of an edifice, at some future day, for a Museum and an Observatory, as well as a Library."<sup>1</sup> Athwart this pleasing picture there darts a reminiscent gleam of poor John Sharpe's unrealized yearnings. Is not that optimist, therefore, vindicated at last in this approaching consummation of his cherished designs? And is he not freed forthwith from any charge of fanaticism, when active men of affairs follow his lead, and even dream of founding also these additional public benefits, unattainable for years to come?

But these dreamers, if you will, were not content with seeing visions. They began earnestly to embody their ideas in living form, and they were of just the creative spirit to breathe the breath of life into any undertaking. Ardent, young,—ranging from twenty-five to thirty-eight years of age,—but well disciplined, they were the acknowledged leaders of an association called the Whig Club, a center of opposition to the royalist or government party. Of good birth themselves, they had ready access to persons of standing in the community. The historian records laconically their initial steps: "To engage all parties in the subscription, it was carried first to the lieutenant-governor and the council,"<sup>2</sup> nearly all of whom gave prompt signature, the Library records show.

At this point it is fitting to learn something about the six young men who had set this abiding work in opera-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 207—208.

tion. All were destined to lives of eminent usefulness and, in some instances, to enduring fame.

Of Philip Livingston, fourth son of the second lord of the manor, it is almost enough to say that he was to be a signer of the Declaration of Independence. A Yale graduate, he turned his attention to business and acquired a handsome fortune, which he freely offered to sustain the credit of his country. Throughout his busy life he devoted himself to public interests, serving as an alderman for eight years; as a member of the assembly, where he was speaker for a time; and as a delegate to the First and Second Continental Congresses, of which latter body he was a member at the time of his death. Moreover, religious matters were close to his heart; throughout his life he maintained allegiance to the Reformed Dutch Church, serving that denomination as deacon and as elder for years. Truly the house founded by the original Robert, the Albany fur trader and promoter, gained greatly in public esteem in its third generation. Talents and resources, such as the first lord of the manor had applied to his own purposes, were generously placed at the disposal of their fellow-beings by not a few of his descendants.

William Livingston, a younger brother, was also graduated from Yale College, where he took highest honors. He studied law with James Alexander and William Smith in turn, at the same time imbibing their political ideas. But he was original and forceful, soon advancing to the front of his chosen calling, though bitterly denounced by opponents as a "Presbyterian lawyer,"—a term implying seditious views toward the government, as well as indicating his denominational affiliation, for at this time he was a trustee of that

church. He compelled attention and won renown as the author of numerous brilliant pamphlet articles, published under the titles, "The Independent Reflector" and "The Watch-Tower." Although he took up his residence in New Jersey in 1760, he retained an active interest in the Library, appreciation of which was shown by his continued election as Trustee from its foundation until 1773, or nineteen years. To prove his sincerity in recommending abolition he freed all his own slaves. Representing his adopted province and state in all three Continental Congresses, and in the Constitutional Convention of 1787 as well, he ranks as one of the most eminent patriots and statesmen of New Jersey, of which he was the first governor under independence.

Closely identified with the brothers in this enterprise was their cousin, Robert R. Livingston, third of the name in the direct line. Achieving eminence at the provincial bar, he was appointed a judge in admiralty, and for the last twelve years of his life was an associate justice of the supreme court. As a delegate to the Stamp Act Congress, he opposed the compulsory acceptance of the hateful paper; but he showed conservatism on the question of American independence. Reputed the wealthiest land owner in New York, he died in 1775, before it was necessary to declare for one side or the other. In church affiliations, Anglican, though a Whig in politics, his services as a vestryman of Trinity parish ceased only with his death. Judge Livingston's trusteeship in the Library covered eighteen years, from the beginning, and was perpetuated in that of his still more distinguished son and namesake.

Mention has several times been made of the historian, William Smith, Jr. For years a law partner of Wil-

liam Livingston, and associated with his personal friends in local politics, a man of attainments though of strong bias, he also was to find a parting of the ways on the question of independence. While "all his sympathies were with the individual rebel, none were with the rebellion that severed the new from old England." Before this occurred he had been a useful member of society as lawyer and jurist, and as a trustee of the Presbyterian Church. After the Revolution he continued allegiance to the crown in Canada, where an honorable career was in store for him as chief justice.

Another "Presbyterian lawyer"—as also a trustee of that church, and a man of great influence, as both writer and speaker—was John Morin Scott. For some years an alderman and later a member of the provincial convention and of the Continental Congress, as also of the local committee of safety, he was no less full of martial ardor. One of the founders of the famous Sons of Liberty, he acted a gallant part in the battle of Long Island, retiring from the war as brigadier-general. Thereafter he held such positions of honor as state senator, member of Congress, and secretary of state in New York.

The last but by no means the least significant name in this little group is that of William Alexander, son of the eminent advocate and councilor, James Alexander, and known in American history as the titular Earl of Stirling. Beginning life in mercantile pursuits, he was made an army contractor by General Shirley and later became his private secretary. At an early age he was appointed to the governor's council of New York and subsequently of New Jersey, where, like his brother-in-law, William Livingston, he dwelt in considerable state. Well in-

formed on literary and scientific subjects, a member of the board of governors of King's College, he was also a man of action; for he played a distinguished rôle in the Revolution, participating conspicuously in notable engagements, for which services he was rewarded with the thanks of Congress on several occasions and with a major-general's commission. Held in high esteem by Washington, whom he was said greatly to resemble in personal appearance, he was characterized at the time of his death, just before the war closed, as "possessed of great bravery, perseverance and extraordinary military talent."<sup>1</sup> By birth and marriage Lord Stirling was related to leading houses of the province. It is a family tradition that his cultivated mother, Mistress Polly Spratt Alexander, in her strong public spirit and desire for improvement, had suggested the Library idea to her son and his friends."<sup>2</sup>

This was early in March, 1754. Within little more than one month they effected an organization, chose a board of Trustees, and, still more to the point, raised by private subscription a sum sufficiently ample to sustain the enterprise. Its first press notice appeared in *The New-York Mercury* for April 8th, as follows:

A Subscription is now on Foot, and carried on with great Spirit, in order to raise Money for erecting and maintaining a publick Library in this City; and we hear that not less than 70 Gentlemen have already subscribed *Five Pounds* Principal, and *Ten Shillings per Annum*, for that Purpose. We make no doubt but a Scheme of this Nature, so well calculated for promoting Lit-

<sup>1</sup> Elias Boudinot, President of the Continental Congress, to General Washington, Philadelphia, Jan. 29, 1783. "Letters to Washington," xcli,

132. MS. Archives, Dept. of State, Washington.

<sup>2</sup> Mrs. John King Van Rensselaer. *The Goede Vrouw of Mana-ha-la*. New York, 1898. P. 382.

erature, will meet with due Encouragement from all who wish the Happiness of the rising Generation.<sup>1</sup>

A considerable number of citizens having become interested, there had been drawn up on April 2d the "ARTICLES OF THE SUBSCRIPTION ROLL OF THE NEW YORK LIBRARY," under which the institution was to prosper for more than eighteen years, or until a charter was secured, in November, 1772. Its objects are announced briefly and without ostentation in these simple phrases,—the first now held in light esteem, though then reserved for dignified occasions,—"*Whereas* a Publick Library would be very useful, as well as ornamental to this City & may be also advantageous to our intended College." The sentence concludes with business-like directness: "We whose Names are hereunto subscribed, in order to promote the Design of erecting one in this City, do promise to pay Five Pounds New York Currency, each on the first Day of May next ensuing the Date hereof."

They further agreed to a yearly assessment of ten shillings and to an annual election of twelve Trustees, to be chosen from subscribers or their assigns at the Exchange in Broad street, between eleven o'clock and noon on the last Tuesday in April. The Trustees were empowered to appropriate funds toward the purchase of books, and to select a repository for them; to appoint a "Library Keeper" at a "propper Sallary"; to regulate the terms of loans; and "to do every Thing they shall judge necessary to erect, preserve, ornament & improve the said Library," under clearly outlined directions.

<sup>1</sup> This same notice was printed under New York news in the Philadelphia papers of April 11th, but not in Boston papers at all, which is sur-

prising in view of its character, even though there was less affinity between those two towns.

Then follow fourteen "Regulations" for the government of the institution and the guidance of its Trustees. The main features comprise the "Right to take out one Book at a Time," with the stipulation, foreign to mod-

NEW-YORK, April 8.

A Subscription is now on Foot, and carried on with great Spirit, in order to raise Money for erecting and maintaining a publick Library in this City; and we hear that not less than 75 Gentlemen have already subscribed Five Pounds Principal, and Ten Shillings per Annum, for that Purpose. We make no Doubt but a Scheme of this Nature, so well calculated for promoting Literature, will meet with due Encouragement from all who wish the Happiness of the Rising Generation.

Last Tuesday Morning £. 150, in Counterfeit British Half-pence, was seized in a House in this City, by George Harrison, Esq; Surveyor and Searcher of his Majesty's Customs. [Such Assiduity as this, in making two considerable Seizures within a Fortnight's Time, will, we trust, be an effectual Step towards preventing the Importation of Counterfeit Copper Halfpence into this Province, so prejudicial to the Country in general, and the fair Trader in particular; and will, undoubtedly, reflect no less Honour on one so zealous for the Good of the Common Weal, than Disgrace on the Person or Persons who may at Times import them, contrary to the express Words of the Act of Assembly of this Province, lately made and provided in that Behalf.]

Custom-House, New-York, Inward Entries.

Sloop Herring, A. Cozzens from Jamaica. Outwards. Sloop Little David, J. Philisfen for Newfoundland. Sloop Elizabeth, C. Miller for Virginia. Brig Fanny, Edward Kendrick for Nevus. Sloop Anna, B. Richards for Barbados. Brig William, J. Moome for Lishon. Snow Mesopotamia, A. Rutgeis for New-Castle. Snow Charming Sally, T. White for Port Dover. Cleared. Sloop Master Mason, J. Crew, Sloop Unity, Hezekiah Sawyer, and Sloop Batchelor, D. Cox to Nova-Scotia. Sloop Weymouth, J. Conklin to Boston. Brig Elizabeth, Josias Smith to V. Islands. Sloop Kingston, John Ebbets to Montserrat. Schooner Hampton, J. Cramer to Antigua. Sloop Dolphin, Thomas Ramsley to Jamaica. Brig Columbus, A. Brown to Medusa. Sloop Bumper, A. Murree to Glasgow.

First press notice of the Society Library. *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, April 11, 1734 (facsimile size). See pp. 135-136.

ern ways, requiring a deposit "in Cash, at least one third more than the value of it"; that the length of the loan "be proportioned as nearly as possible to the Bulk of the Volume," together with certain penalties for delinquents; and that the majority of members might, at any annual meeting, amend the instrument. The Trustees

were to be elected by ballot, should serve "Gratis," and might appoint a Treasurer, "at a proper Allowance for his Trouble," who, however, could not be one of their number; and they were to be held responsible for the financial status of their charge.

Individual shares or "rights" might be bequeathed, inherited or alienated, "as of any other Chattel"; but, no matter how many rights he might possess, each subscriber was to have only one vote. It is interesting to observe how the term "right"—meaning a share—has been carefully retained to the present day as one of the distinguishing marks of the Society Library. It is also of interest to note, retrospectively, that the liberal intent of the donors of the Corporation Library was here perpetuated in part, by the provision that all privileges, including the loan of books, should be extended to any resident of the province at large.

On the eve of the first election for Trustees this notice, here copied from *The New-York Gazette: or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, for April 29th, was inserted in the current newspapers:

**T**HE GENTLEMEN, who are *Subscribers* to the PUBLIC-LIBRARY, which is to be erected in this City, are hereby *Notified*, that To-morrow, being the *last Tuesday* in *April*, is the Day appointed by the Subscription Articles for their Meeting; in order to elect *Twelve* TRUSTEES, who are to have the immediate Care and Management of the said *Library*, for the Year ensuing. They are therefore desired to convene for that Purpose, *To-morrow morning* at *Eleven o'Clock*, at the *EXCHANGE Coffee-Room* in *Broad-Street*. As it will be the first public Transaction of the Subscribers, in Advancement of this excellent and useful Design, it is hoped, that Gentlemen will not fail to give a very general Attendance.



Not a whisper of the proceedings at this first balloting for Trustees has reached our ears. It is perhaps too much to expect to find no politics in the affair, considering the temper of the six originators; and especially in view of the fact that in the same year King's College was nearly strangled at birth by sectarian dissensions, with their underlying political motives. That there *was* politics in this election is made very plain from a long article, number XXV of "The Watch-Tower" series, in the *Mercury* for May 12, 1755, signed "B."<sup>1</sup>

After explaining the intent of the founders as "well judging that an Acquaintance with Books would tend to unshackle the Minds of their fellow Subjects," the outburst proceeds with increasing bitterness:

No sooner were the Subscriptions compleat, and a Day appointed for the Election of Trustees, than a dirty Scheme was concerted, for excluding as many *English* Presbyterians as possible, from the Trusteeship: concerted, not by *Trinity Church* in this City, but by some of her unworthy Members: Which Distinction is here carefully taken, to prevent those contracted Bigots from misrepresenting the Sentiments of an Author, who for the Reasons abovementioned, holds that, and all other Protestant Churches, in the highest Veneration. This Scheme a certain Gentleman in this Province undertook to execute; and by his Emissaries dispersed among the Subscribers a Number of Copies of such a List of Trustees, as best suited his known Humour and Inclination, and advised many of them carefully to avoid electing any Presbyterians to the Trusteeship. Strongly prepossessed in favour of his own judicious Choice, the good Man doubtless expected it would be submitted to by many of the Subscribers with a most obsequious Deference. How well his Expectations were answered, the Event of

<sup>1</sup> Probably the Rev. Aaron Burr, D.D., president of the college at Princeton, for he was closely asso-

ciated with William Livingston in the preparation of these articles.

that Election will best determine. Thus much however is certain, that in Spite of his utmost Efforts, the Subscribers were so obstinately impartial, as to chuse Persons who, from their Acquaintance with Literature, they imagined were able to make a proper Collection of Books.

Nevertheless, we can only conjecture whether the elections were close, whether there really was active rivalry for the honor, or whether some of the nominees may not have accepted their new responsibilities reluctantly, questioning the outcome. The gathering itself, composed of representative citizens, met in the new Exchange at the foot of Broad street, and was probably as large as often assembled for any purpose. The result bears witness to the intelligence and wisdom of the voters. Of the twelve gentlemen chosen to the first board of Trustees of the Society Library, three were founders, Robert R. Livingston, William Livingston and William Alexander. Upon the remaining nine members attention will next be directed, to learn what manner of men they were, these guardians over the earliest days of the institution we behold to-day, time-honored but virile and full of promise. In response to our invocation the muse of history will now summon them one at a time, for a brief and reverent review.

First among these twelve apostles of culture rises the august figure of his Honor James De Lancey, Esquire, lieutenant-governor of the province of New York throughout this decade, and for thirty years chief justice of the supreme court. Scarcely past the prime of life, handsome, brilliant, imperious yet urbane, he lived and moved in a style commensurate with his dignities and great wealth. The very rumbling of his gilded coach over the rough city streets, no less than the gracious but

stately inclination of his flowing peruke, proclaimed the majesty of the law and the power of the crown whose servant he was. In political astuteness without a peer, respected and admired for his quick penetration and unfailing good judgment, and popular for his affable manners, James De Lancey wielded an influence over the men of his day exceeded by no other individual in New York prior to the Revolution.

Next comes the Hon. Joseph Murray, a man of sober mien, for years the foremost constitutional lawyer of the province, his Majesty's attorney-general, a member of the council and the chief exponent of the royalist view. Serving Trinity parish as vestryman and warden for many years, he was also often retained by the Common Council in its litigations, usually declining compensation. In 1728 his disinterestedness was recognized in bestowing upon him the freedom of the city. Devoted to the welfare of King's College, of which he was one of the first governors, he bequeathed to it a handsome legacy and his private collection of valuable books, which formed the nucleus of the College Library. Although somewhat advanced in life, he was still the acknowledged leader of the colonial bar.

Close upon his heels treads the Hon. John Chambers, often pitted against him in council deliberations, as an uncompromising foe of government by prerogative, demanding for provincials the freeholder rights of Englishmen. With Mr. Murray, in return for gratuitous legal services, he had been complimented with the freedom of the city by the Common Council, of which body he was afterward a member. He was also concerned with Trinity Church affairs, a vestryman for years and succeeding Mr. Murray as warden. An associate justice

of the supreme court, he had been identified with that great advocate, Andrew Hamilton of Philadelphia, in securing the acquittal of the printer Zenger, nearly twenty years before, whereby freedom of the press was established in New York.

As though seeking to soften the ardor of their discussions with words of peace, there now advances from the shadows the benign and somberly clad form of the Rev. Henry Barclay, D.D., second rector of Trinity Church. For years a devoted laborer among the Mohawks, he had been induced some time before to take up the mantle of the Rev. William Vesey. He was to find amongst the elect as bitter feuds as prevailed in his own heathen field, but these he set out resolutely to bring to reconciliation. Displaying unusual adaptability, he won from the cultivated and well-to-do the same high regard so openly accorded him by the poor Indian.

Our study now centers in the grave and dignified personality of the Hon. James Alexander, long a member of the council, sometime attorney-general and advocate-general, and venerated as an oracle by his associates at the bar. In addition to his legal learning, he had marked capacity for scientific research, becoming with Dr. Franklin and others a founder of the American Philosophical Society. One writer says that he was "equally distinguished for his humanity, generosity, great abilities and honourable stations." One of the leading actors in the dramatic Zenger episode, for his boldness in criticising the bench he suffered temporary disbarment and loss of conciliar honors. Restoration followed soon, however, the grand jury and Common Council drawing up elaborate testimonials to his character and ability. On the passage of the Montgomerie charter in 1731, he had

been given the freedom of the city, together with James De Lancey and William Smith. For years he was the mouthpiece of the popular party, though not gifted as a speaker, directing public sentiment through the columns of John Peter Zenger's *Weekly Journal*.

In the Hon. John Watts the Library had a powerful supporter, for he was a leader in the province, socially and politically. A merchant prince of business life above reproach, he was ever active and far-sighted in promoting the welfare of his fellow-citizens. He was foremost in the erection of the Exchange in 1752, to which he later "with others" presented a large clock; and he was deeply interested in the establishment of the New York Hospital, of which society he was the first president, from 1770 till a successor was chosen in 1784. As speaker of the assembly and while a member of the council, Mr. Watts allied himself closely with the policies of his intimate friend and brother-in-law, James De Lancey; and afterward, as attorney-general under Governor Monkton, he showed his partisanship so strongly, that he is said to have been designated as the next royal governor, had the war terminated otherwise. Yet he was withal a most intrepid denouncer of injustice, and was the only one among them all who faced the Earl of Loudoun to oppose the quartering of troops in the city in 1756. A Trustee of the Society Library for twenty years, his attention to its interests ceased only with his removal, in 1775, to England, where he died an exile, bereft of his great estates.

A wholly different element of New York's social structure now demands representation—a class the most fundamental of all, the mercantile. In the person of the Hon. William Walton there appears more of the mod-

ern self-made man than is generally to be seen in the grandees of that day. The most prominent member of a noted family, he both inherited and acquired great wealth. Through certain trade preferences conceded by the Spaniards of Florida and the West Indies, and by dexterous privateering during the French war, the Waltons literally coined money. A man of strong public spirit he, as well as John Watts, refused all compensation while representing the city in the assembly. Established in the most elegant private dwelling in the colonies, and a member of the governor's council, Captain Walton maintained so lavish an hospitality, that stories of his entertainments, replete with gold and silver service, were adduced in Parliament as proofs positive that the colonists were not impoverished by so-called repressive acts.

The lot next falls upon Benjamin Nicoll, Esq., a man in middle life. Carefully fitted for Yale by his stepfather, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Johnson, first president of King's College, he subsequently entered the legal profession in New York, where he had become at his untimely demise, in 1760, "a Lawyer of great note, . . . than whom no man was ever more lamented throughout this province."<sup>1</sup> So wrote his afflicted parent to the Archbishop of Canterbury, but without exaggeration, to judge from his record as a devoted Trustee of the Library up to the time of his death, as also a vestryman of Trinity Church and a governor of King's College, of the movement to establish which institution he is said to have been, with Dr. Johnson, "the life and soul." His public career comprised several years' service as an assemblyman of conservative leanings, and an appointment, at

<sup>1</sup> *N. Y. Col. Docs.*, VII, 441.

the very time our story opens, to act with Joseph Murray, William Smith, Cadwallader Colden and William Livingston on an important commission to settle the boundary question with Massachusetts. Years afterward the final adjustment of this matter accorded with the findings of the New York commissioners.

Last of all we are introduced to one of the youngest and cleverest of the little company, William Peartree Smith, a second cousin of the historian, and of a family long identified with New York. His grandfather, William "Port Royal" Smith, an alderman for many years, was son-in-law to Col. William Peartree, mayor of the city from 1703 to 1706. During his residence in New York he was for some years a trustee of the Presbyterian Church. A classmate and life-long intimate of William Livingston, he also took up his residence in New Jersey, where he had earlier been instrumental in the founding of the college at Princeton. At one time secretary of the province of New Jersey, he acted in 1774 as chairman of its general committee of correspondence, and was sent the next year as delegate to the Continental Congress. Genuinely interested in literature, as also an ardent patriot, he was widely known as a writer of both prose and verse in his country's cause; for a time he had been associated with William Livingston in editing the "Independent Reflector." After the Revolution he held various positions of honor in his adopted state.

From this review of the individuals composing the first board of Trustees of the New York Society Library, there is no question as to the sagacity of the subscribers in their choice. These twelve gentlemen represented as a whole the best that the province

afforded in position, cultivation, attainments, native ability and character. Their very difference in age was a good omen, as well as the variety in their lines of activity. It is of interest further to note that, as regards political affiliation, six of them were of one party and half a dozen of the other: Messrs. De Lancey, Murray, Barclay, Watts, Walton and Nicoll properly belonged to the aristocratic or government party, while Messrs. Chambers and Smith, the Alexanders and the Livingstons were as naturally aligned with the popular side. In the next chapter we shall see how they attacked the problems with which the new enterprise fairly bristled.

Before continuing the narrative, however, more than passing mention is due the allusion in the Articles to "our intended College." It is a matter of no ordinary moment that the Society Library and King's College were founded in the same year. That two such undertakings, representing ideas so advanced, could originate at the very same time, reveals an abundance of cultivation and public spirit, despite "the low state of science and the narrow views and jealousies of sectarian zeal," which Smith the historian knowingly says proved obstacles to the early advance of the College.

The close bond between these twin-sister institutions of culture may further be seen in the frequent identity of their officers, from that day to this. Of the first Library board, for instance, no fewer than eight—James De Lancey, John Chambers and Henry Barclay, each *ex officio*, and Joseph Murray, William Walton, John Watts, Benjamin Nicoll and William Livingston—were named among the first governors of the College, showing also that men of ability are usually to be found



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in more than one good work. And this hereditary concord between the two institutions has never been more marked than to-day, in their reciprocal privileges of consultation, so cordially subsisting between the Society Library and the Library of Columbia University.

## II

FIRST STEPS, 1754—1772

**T**HE *New-York Mercury* for Monday, May 6, 1754, in announcing the names of the Trustees elected "to superintend the Affairs of our LIBRARY, for the present Year," adds: "The above gentlemen are desired to meet To-morrow, at the House of *Edward Willet*, in the Broad-Way, precisely at 11 o'Clock."

While we as well as the new officers await this interesting event, it should be stated that from now on our chief source of information as to the proceedings of successive boards of Trustees is found in the complete series of their books of minutes, happily preserved to the Library through all its century-and-a-half of existence. The first two volumes, ending respectively in 1772 and 1832, are leather-covered, dingy old folios, the writing varying in style, and in conformity with the canons of orthography, under different scribes, but as legible to-day as when penned.

The entries at first are variously headed, "At a Meeting of the Trustees of the New-York Library," "At a Meeting of the Trustees of the Library," or simply "At a Meeting of the Trustees," until October, 1759, after

which date the stereotyped form begins, "At a Meeting of the Trustees of the New York Society Library," ending with place and hour of assembling. Then after the word "Present" are listed the members in attendance. Seven constituting a quorum, it often chanced that no meeting could be held, but abortive attempts were scrupulously entered, even when scarcely two or three were gathered together.

Although for its early years the institution was not styled "Society Library" in the minutes, it yet is plain that this name was soon decided upon, from an announcement in the *Mercury* of October 21, 1754, addressed to "the Proprietors of the New-York Society Library," as also from subsequent newspaper notices. The origin of this unique title is often a subject of inquiry. Some have maintained, in view of the high social standing of its originators, as of its general membership always, that the institution was so called because it was meant to be, as it has ever been, the Library of New York *Society*! But this opinion cannot be entertained seriously, for the term "society" had not then, nor until comparatively recent times, the limited or derived sense of *caste*. Besides, such a narrow view is inconsistent with the liberal aim of the founders, and tends to bring undeserved reproach upon the institution.

The question is susceptible of explanation as follows: in the beginning there was formed a voluntary association of persons, a company, a society. This term, "the Society," has been used officially in the minutes and in miscellaneous documents and notices to designate the organization always, the expression, "the Library,"—now in common parlance, and therefore used throughout the present work,—having a colloquial and less formal

tone. This Society, then, distinctively a New York enterprise, was instituted to found and perpetuate a Library; hence—the New York Society Library. As such it corresponds exactly in purpose to the Library Company of Philadelphia, the Redwood Library<sup>1</sup> at Newport, and the Charleston (S. C.) Library Society, all thriving to-day,<sup>2</sup> and to the Social Libraries so common in New England just before and in the half-century following the Revolution. The generic or class name of all these institutions is Proprietary Libraries; yet they have always been Public Libraries in the original meaning of the term,—that is, available or open to the public, like public houses or conveyances,—in contradistinction to private or parochial or special collections. It is only since about 1850 that the word “public” has come to mean “free,” as applied to libraries.

For fully one hundred years the Society Library was popularly called the “City Library,” long after the Mercantile Library Association and the Apprentices’ Library were established in 1820, and even after the

<sup>1</sup> Since 1835 known officially as The Redwood Library and Athenæum.

<sup>2</sup> Among similar institutions, long since passed into oblivion, may be mentioned the Book Company of Durham, Conn., established in 1733; the Philogrammatican Library of Lebanon, Conn., instituted in 1738 (see “Booklovers of 1738—One of the First Libraries in America,” by Mrs. Martha W. Hooker, in *The Connecticut Magazine*, X (1906), 715 *et seq.*); the Elizabeth-Town (N. J.) Library Company, founded in 1755 (see *The New-York Gazette; or, the Weekly Post-Boy*, March 3, 1760); and the equally obscure Albany Society Library, whose bookplate bears date of 1759 (see illustration in *American Book-Plates*, by Charles D. Allen, p. 84). Some vol-

umes of a later colonial association, the Hartford Library Company, formed in 1774 (see *The Connecticut Courant*, Feb. 22, March 1, 15, 22, Apl. 26), are now preserved in the Hartford Public Library. Of those organized soon after the Revolution, the Library Company of Baltimore, incorporated in 1797, was merged into the Maryland Historical Society in 1854; while the Boston Library Society, dating from 1792, has successfully maintained an independent existence. Wider in scope than any of these, the Boston Athenæum, which has lately celebrated its centennial anniversary (1907), presents a different type of proprietary establishment, as will presently appear (see Chapter VII).

insignificant beginning of the present City Library in the City Hall, a collection chiefly of records for consultation only, under supervision by the board of aldermen.<sup>1</sup> With the gradual development of the modern free Public Library system, however, the old appellation has fallen into disuse, and would not now be recognized as meaning by far the oldest Library in the city—the New York Society Library.

Ten Trustees are recorded as forming the first meeting of its newly elected board, held on May 7th, the only absentees being James Alexander and Robert R. Livingston. They met at the City Arms,<sup>2</sup> on the corner of Broadway and Stone (Thames) street, the principal tavern in town, then but lately opened in the former residence of Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey. That dignitary was no doubt called to the chair, though the minutes are mute on the subject; in fact it is not until 1791 that there is mention of a chairman at all. The chronicle of proceedings is pitifully meager in the early years, simply giving a bare outline of the few measures approved, the record of attendance and, not invariably, the results of annual elections.

<sup>1</sup> After the destruction of the old Corporation Library in 1776, the city harbored no collection of its own until an ordinance of January, 1849, set aside a room "for the accommodation of a Library, to contain the books now belonging to the Common Council, and which may hereafter belong to them." As early as December, 1816, there had been a tentative but ineffectual suggestion of "the expediency of establishing a Library for the use of the Common Council." Final action by the aldermen was occasioned by a gift to the city of a "splendid case of valuable medals [now in the keeping of the New York Historical Society], com-

memorative of interesting events" in the reign of Pope Pius IX, "recently received from him through the agency of Mons. A[lexandre] Vatte-  
mare." (See p. 55a.) Occupying various rooms, the City Library has been in its present apartments since January, 1898, Librarian Philip Baer having held office since January, 1895.

<sup>2</sup> Called also the Province Arms Tavern, the New York Arms and, after the Revolution, the New York State Arms. In 1792 the Tontine Association bought the old stone structure and erected on its site the famous City Hotel, demolished in turn about 1850.

The initial act of this first board was very sensibly a resolution empowering John Watts, William P. Smith and William Alexander, Trustees, and John Livingston—evidently for the shareholders in general, as he was not then a Trustee—to “receive the Subscription Money, from the several Subscribers, in order to be laid out in Books for the Library,” a service they “agreed to perform Gratis.” Mr. Smith was made “Clerk,” also a “gratis” office, and ordered to “prepare a proper Book at the public Expense, for entring the Minutes.” They voted to meet “in the Public Library-Room” thrice yearly, on the first Tuesday afternoon in April, May and September, at three o’clock. A fine of three shillings was to be levied for excuseless absence, “to be paid into the Hands of the Cashier,” but no further mention is made of the penalty or of any enforcement.

As few steps were taken at the opening session, in all likelihood their deliberations at the tavern were weighty and prolonged. At any rate, there was unfinished business when they adjourned, to meet nine days hence at the same place, each Trustee pledged to bring a “catalogue” of suitable books. On reconvening, some of them, “viz<sup>t</sup> Mess<sup>rs</sup> Barclay, W<sup>m</sup> Livingston, Rob<sup>t</sup> R. Livingston, W<sup>m</sup> Alexander & W<sup>m</sup> P. Smith, produced a List of Books.” “But,” the minutes record with much simplicity, “as M<sup>r</sup> Murray imagined, there would not be sufficient time, at this Meeting, to Consider, examine, & collect a proper Catalogue from the Same,” the important matter was again postponed. Nor until the end of the month was a full report rendered of their choice for the first consignment, when, “having now spent some time in examining the several Lists of Books before produced, the Trustees agreed upon the following

Catalogue selected from the s<sup>d</sup> Lists, to be sent for by the first Opportunity."

This combined list, as spread upon the records, includes some 250 titles of leading works of the day in literature and science. It is interesting in itself, and is of especial value as showing the taste of the Trustees and their aim to secure the best and a variety. It is pleasing also to observe how impressed they were with the need of frugality, some works being endorsed "2<sup>d</sup> hand if good." Naturally there are the usual selections from the ancient classics, from Elizabethan writers, and from essayists of the age of Anne. Historical works abound, interspersed among memoirs, diplomatic correspondence, party pamphlets, and philosophical and scientific brochures. Legal minds presumably yearned for "State Tryals complete at large" or "Debates in Parliam!"; while the mercantile element was to find relaxation preferably in books of travel, diverting and yet not remote from accustomed interests.

For the clergy there were provided standard commentaries, as also devotional and theological dissertations without number, though not of the extreme heaviness of earlier collections in New York. The remainder consisted of treatises in mathematics and in the field of the natural sciences, together with an assortment from the realms of music, oratory and logic. Truly these were earnest-minded men, aware and proud of their responsibility. We may readily fancy how suggestions had poured in upon them from interested subscribers, and no less from members of their families. One is impressed with the utter absence of light reading in the final decision; for, after approving the list, Mr. Watts was to "transmit by the first Opportunity," to one

## Articles of the Subscription Roll of the New York Library

*Whereas* a Publick Library would be very useful, as well as ornamented to this City, may be also advantageous to our intended College; We whose Names are hereunto subscribed, in order to promote the Design of erecting one in this City, do promise to pay Five pounds New York Currency, each on the first Day of May next ensuing the Date hereof; and Ten Shillings yearly, each, on every first Day of May forever hereafter, to Twelve Trustees, to be chosen by the Majority of us, or our Assigns, annually; out of the number of Subscribers hereto, or their Assigns, for which purpose, we agree to motionably on the last Tuesday in April, in every Year ensuing the Date hereof, at the Exchange in Broad Street, in this City, between the Hours of Eleven & Twelve, which Trustees, or the Majority of them, are hereby impowred to dispose of the said Money, in purchasing such Books, as they shall think proper from Time to Time, and in procuring a House or Room to deposit them in, To appoint a Library Keeper, and allow him a proper Salary for his care & attendance of the said Library; to regulate the Terms on which the Books belonging to the said Library shall be lent (those who are not Subscribers being to pay such Rates for the Loan of Books as the Trustees shall appoint) and to do every Thing they shall judge necessary to erect, preserve, ornament & improve the said Library; which they are to keep under the following Regulations

That Every subscriber, or his Assigns, shall have a Right to take out one Book at a Time, depositing in Cash, at least one third more than the value of it, with the Library Keeper, and to keep it for so long a Time as the Trustees for the Time being shall appoint, to be proportioned as nearly as possible to the Bith of the Volume; and in case he shall keep it longer to pay for the use of the said Book, after the Expiration of the said Time according to the Rates (to be settled by the Trustees) to be paid by those who shall not be Subscribers hereto. For this purpose Books shall be valued by the Trustees, and a Catalogue of them with the  
Prices

First page of the Articles (reduced). See p. 136 et seq.



Moses Franks in London, the sum of £300 "in Bills of Exch" for these books, "or such other modern Authors as he may judge most suitable for a public Library, & have obtained an established Reputation among the Learned." Then follow the names of "paid" subscribers, to the number of 118, including three "in England," Moses, Naphtali and Aaron Franks, the agents of the enterprise; certainly the soliciting committee had done its work well, for the list comprises leading citizens of the period.

Among them, besides individuals mentioned elsewhere in these pages, appear the names of Mayor Holland, his successor, John Cruger the younger, James Duane, first mayor after the Revolution, Abraham De Peyster, provincial treasurer, Capt. Archibald Kennedy, later known as the Earl of Cassilis, the Rev. Samuel Auchmuty, assistant minister and afterward rector of Old Trinity, the Rev. Alexander Cumming of the Presbyterian Church, Lambert Moore, Esq., for years clerk of the board of governors of King's College, Col. Beverley Robinson, of French War luster, James McEvers, who very sensibly resigned the odious post of stamp collector, James Parker and Hugh Gaine, the well-known printers and editors, and Dr. Richard Shuckburgh, reputed author of "Yankee Doodle," in addition to members of such other notable old New York families as Abeel, Alexander, Alsop, Aspinwall, Barclay, Bayard, Beekman, Crommeline, Cuyler, De Lancey, Des Brosses, Dey, Duncan, Gouverneur, Harison, Jones, Kortright, Lawrence, Lispenard, Livingston, Ludlow, Morris, Nichols, Nicoll, Ogden, Provoost, Richard, Smith, Stuyvesant, Van Cortlandt, Vander Spiegel, Van Horne, Walton and Watts, many of whose

shares are held to-day by descendants, and, in not a few instances, of the same name.

During the summer, the question of securing proper accommodations for the expected collection was doubtless much discussed. At the September meeting, as already stated, they adopted the clever plan of taking charge of the unused old Corporation Library, in return for permission from the Common Council to keep their own books in the "Library Room" in the City Hall, with what entire success we already know.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, in anticipation of the approaching arrival of the books, they drew up their first set of rules, to be "strictly observed by the Librarian,"—yet to be appointed,—as follows:

*Reg. 1.* That no Book whatsoever belonging to this Library, shall be detained in the hands of any Subscriber, longer than the space of *One Month*, under Penalty of paying for the use of the same for any longer time as a *Non-Subscriber*.

*Reg. 2.* Every Non-Subscriber shall pay to the Librarian, for the use of a Book after the following Rates *Viz*<sup>t</sup>

For a Folio Volumn . . . . 1 Month . . . 4s.

For a Quarto D<sup>o</sup> . . . . 1 Month . . . 2s.

For an Octavo, or lesser Vol. . 1 Month . . . 1s.

And if any Book shall be detained in the hands of a Borrower longer than the time herein limited, he shall pay for every day exceeding the said time *One Shilling* untill the same be returned.

*Reg. 3.* Every Non-Subscriber, upon taking a Book out of the Library, shall deposit in the hands of the Librarian one third more than the Value of the Book taken, and give a sufficient Receipt for the same.

This table is printed in the *Mercury* for October 21st, which same issue conveys the satisfying information,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 77-78.

already quoted, that the books "lately imported are placed for the present, by Leave of the Corporation, in their Library Room in the City-Hall," where "constant Attendance" was assured on Tuesdays and Fridays from ten to twelve. In November, however, a notice in the *Mercury* declared the collection accessible only on Tuesdays, for one hour, "during the winter season."

Thus, in the meantime, the eagerly awaited collection had come, after a voyage covering "42 Days from London," according to the advice in the *Mercury* of October 14th. The arrival of the volumes is announced in this latter issue with the following flourish:

Some Time ago we informed our Readers, that a Subscription was then on foot for raising a Sum of Money in order to erect a public Library in this City; we now have the great Pleasure and Satisfaction of acquainting them, That all the Books sent for, are arrived safe in Capt. Miller. We hope that all who have a Taste for polite Literature, and an eager Thirst after Knowledge and Wisdom, will now repair to those Fountains and Repositories from whence they can, by Study, be collected. And we heartily wish, that the glorious Motives of acquiring *that* which alone distinguishes human Nature (we mean Science and Virtue, join'd to the noble Principles of being useful to Mankind, and more especially to our dear Country) will be sufficient to excite the most Lethargic, to peruse the Volumes purchased for this End, by Means of the Advice and Endeavours of Gentlemen whom we and future Generations, will have Reason, we hope, to praise and extoll; and whom, we cannot help saying, are an Honour to their Country: We finally wish, that *New-York*, now she has an Opportunity, will show that she comes not short of the other Provinces, in Men of excellent Genius, who, by cultivating the Talents of Nature, will take off that Reflection cast on us by the neighbouring Colonies, of being an ignorant People; and make the following Maxim of *Seneca's* our own: *Inter Studia Versandum est et inter Auctores Sapien-*

*tia, ut Quæsitâ discamus, nondum Inventâ quæramus. SEN. Epis. civ.*

A printed catalogue of the new collection was straightway published by Hugh Gaine and advertised in his *Mercury* on October 21st, at the price of "Four Coppers." Unhappily no specimen of this first catalogue of the Society Library is known to be in existence, though there is ever the chance of one's coming to light in some ancestral attic. Tradition has it that the initial consignment comprised "about 700 Volumes of new, well chosen, Books,"<sup>1</sup> a somewhat exaggerated statement, however, as appears on consultation of the minutes. Not more than 650 volumes, at the most, can have constituted the original collection, which William Smith prophesied would "in Process of Time . . . probably become vastly rich and voluminous."<sup>2</sup>

After some months' trial, the following "Rates" were substituted in June, 1755, for keeping books out over a month: "for every folio, per diem 1 s. For every Quarto 9<sup>d</sup> For every Octavo 6<sup>d</sup> and for every Duodecimo 3<sup>d</sup>" It was also decreed that, "instead of an allowance of one Month for the Loan of Books of All Sizes," the time be "For every Folio 6 Weeks, For every Quarto 4 Weeks, For every Octavo 3 Weeks & for every Duodecimo 2 Weeks," thus returning to the plan of the original Articles.

At this time John Morin Scott was given charge of the finances, in place of William P. Smith, and also "the Care of the Library," with power to depute the same. No hint is vouchsafed as to who had been acting as custodian before; probably Mr. Smith had engaged

<sup>1</sup> William Smith, *The History of the Province of New-York*. London, 1757. P. 195.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

some person, for he appears to have been the sole officer of the board that first year. Again, in November, 1756, Gabriel Ludlow was put in charge of the collection, and, together with David Clarkson, was directed to receive funds and subscriptions. But in May, 1757, Mr. Smith was once more made "Clerk to the Trustees," an office evidently including guardianship of the capital, then "in M<sup>r</sup>. Ludlow's hands."

At this stage it is well to pause for a glance at the changes that had taken place in the ranks of the Trustees. In consequence of three more elections, held regularly according to advertisement at the Exchange, thirteen new names appear on the roll, of whom three were the remaining founders, Philip Livingston, John Morin Scott and William Smith, Jr., all chosen at the second election. That this balloting of 1755 was attended with a repetition of the contest of a year before, with even greater acrimony, is revealed in the same communication from the forceful pen of "B," in the *Mercury* for May 12th, above quoted in part.<sup>1</sup>

Referring to the former effort as "A Design so disgraceful and ridiculous in itself, and so effectually frustrated, . . . [as to] have satisfied any Man, but a blind, hot-headed, and imprudent Zealot," this racy writer proceeds to inform how, "after the fullest Defeat in the most shameful Cause, Bigotry ventured again to rear her Head"; and how a second attempt was made, "equally unsuccessful with the first." Responsibility was attributed to "the Resentment of a Bigot, now heightened into Madness by the late frequent controversial Defeats of HIGH-CHURCH, on the Subject of the COLLEGE," which "drove him, in Defiance of Reason,

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 139, 140.

and the Rules of Probability, into a Resolution, once more to attack the Presbyterians, and that in a Manner more base and insidious than the Former."

He then explains that, on the day before election, "this palpable Untruth was impudently coined," and "as impudently propagated, *That the Presbyterians were resolved to turn out every Churchman from the Trusteeship.*" "With what View this vile Slander was published," was "a Matter too obvious, to require a curious Disquisition." After denouncing such a report, as having "a natural Tendency to prepossess every warm *Episcopalian* with the strongest Prejudices against the *Presbyterians*," the philippic continues: "And doubtless had this Scheme taken its full Effect, the Trusteeship would have been filled with a Set of Persons far different in their Sentiments, from those who now enjoy it."

This unpleasant exposé may well close with its very interesting estimate of the position and opportunities of the trusteeship:

It must indeed be admitted, that the Office of a Trustee of our Library is, at present, of very little Importance, either to its Possessor, or the Public. We have an excellent Collection of Books, and no Money in Bank to be squandered. Hence it is impossible to prostitute the Office; and consequently a Matter of Indifference whoever fills it. But if its Unimportance cannot subvert the Right of a Subscriber to stand Candidate for the Post, all undue Means to destroy the Impartiality of an Election, is an Abridgment of his Right; which doubtless as an *Englishman*, he may justly resent.

The fact that the seven new persons then chosen to the board were all of the popular party is proof enough that "the *Presbyterians*, . . . from a Love of *British Freedom*, . . . devised Means in this particular Case,

effectually to disappoint the Invaders of their Rights," and that "in doing it they were remarkably successful." They were William Smith, William Smith, Jr., Philip, John and Peter Van Brugh Livingston, John Vander Spiegel and John Morin Scott, an interesting group, as showing the alignment of Dutch Church members with Presbyterians in opposition to the Anglican element. Though John Chambers and James Alexander of the Whig contingent were retired, their places were filled by representatives of the same views, William Walton being the sole Trustee with government leanings returned to office.

The next year saw a turning of the tables, for, of the seven above mentioned, only one, John Livingston, was then reelected; while his Honor Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey, the Hon.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Murray, the Rev. Dr. Barclay, the Hon. John Watts and Benjamin Nicoll, Esq., were triumphantly reinstated; as was also the Hon. John Chambers of the opposition, which lost in its turn William Livingston, the Hon. William Alexander, Robert R. Livingston and William P. Smith, besides six of the Whigs elected only the year before. Furthermore, the aristocratic following gained four new men in the Hon. Oliver De Lancey, the Hon. Henry Cruger, David Clarkson and Gabriel Ludlow.

In 1757 there came another reversal, by which there was a more equitable division of the opposing political forces, with only two new names, Peter Keteltas and Goldsbrow Banyar. Thereafter, a wholesome calm seems to have settled down upon that annual function, for, in the seventeen remaining years before the disrup-

<sup>1</sup> The title "Hon." in colonial days implied a member of the governor's council.

tion occurred, but ten additional individuals were called to the work, changes seemingly taking place only with inroads of time.

When one surveys the characters and careers of these several Trustees, one finds the fire of partisan zeal sinking low in comparison with their general worth and usefulness in their day and community. Of this type Peter Van Brugh Livingston, an older brother of Philip and William, is a conspicuous example. A successful merchant, with an unblemished record for probity, he not only aided the city and its various concerns in numberless ways, but also has a strong claim on his country's gratitude, for patriotic assistance with funds and credit. Stanchly Presbyterian in church affiliations, he served as an elder for more than twenty years, and for eight years as a trustee, of the old First Church. He was also treasurer of the New York Hospital for seven years. His trusteeship in the Library lasted until the very eve of the Revolution, but he left the city in 1787, before the institution was set on its feet again. John Livingston, yet another member of this remarkable brotherhood, appears to have been its only Tory representative, perhaps because of his large mercantile interests. He did not turn against his family, however; while his services to church and state, in deliberations of the Common Council and of the Dutch Church consistory, entitle him to respectful appreciation.

The Hon. William Smith, Sr., was reputed the most eloquent speaker in the province. With his friend, James Alexander, he had pleaded the causes of free speech and free press, to their own personal temporary humiliation, but to the lasting advantage of democracy. These same men were also associated in founding the



first public school in New York in 1732. Honors heaped upon him never turned his head, as he calmly put aside what did not fit in with his carefully planned life. At the age of twenty-seven, he had declined the presidency of Yale College; again, in 1760 he refused the vacant chief justiceship. But he served his fellow-citizens with distinction in the several posts of councilor, attorney-general, advocate-general and associate justice of the highest provincial tribunal; and no less useful was he as one of the earliest trustees, and later as an elder, of the Presbyterian Church in New York.

It may have been noticed that the lawyers were in large majority on the first board—not at all an astonishing phenomenon. Little by little, however, the merchants gained admittance, until it is worthy of comment that, of the twenty-five Trustees in office prior to 1760, there were ten merchants to thirteen “Esquires.” They include John Vanderspiegel, who acted as the first regular Treasurer of the Library for thirteen years; Henry Cruger, the son and the brother of a mayor of this city, himself an assemblyman and later holding a seat in the council; David Clarkson, of the old dry goods firm, a Trustee for twenty years, and as long a vestryman and warden of Trinity parish; Gabriel Ludlow, clerk of the assembly for an extended term and for nearly a generation a vestryman of Old Trinity; and Peter Keteltas, identified as inseparably with the history of the Dutch Church, a man who “was not only esteemed, as he truly was, an upright and honest man, but enjoyed the singular felicity of passing through life unsuspected of an unworthy action.”<sup>1</sup>

A right gallant figure was the Hon. Col. Oliver De

<sup>1</sup> Obituary notice in *The New-York Journal*, August 29, 1792.

Lancey, younger brother of the lieutenant-governor and a large landholder of the day. Preëminently a military character, he yet was identified with civic interests, serving for a short time as alderman. Impetuous and intriguing in disposition, he led in all political manœuvring, though lacking the superb equipoise of his brother. A member of the council for sixteen years, he maintained his allegiance to the crown, dashing off at the head of his own battalion under a brigadier-general's commission from his Majesty, never to return. Alas for his elegant country-seat at Bloomingdale, to go up in pitiless flames, and alas for this illustrious but loyalist family, its great estates forever confiscate, and its once proud station but a local memory!

Not nearly so tragic a fate befell Goldsbrov Banyar, deputy-secretary of the province for many years, and of whom Lieutenant-Governor Colden wrote to England, in recommending his appointment to the council, that there was "no Man . . . more usefull on every account," nor "so long conversant in public affairs." At the outbreak of the Revolution he retired quietly to Rhinebeck and later to Albany, where he peacefully ended his days at a great age. He served as first president of the famous British-American St. George's Society; while his trusteeship in the Library covered thirteen years.

Resuming our narrative, an item of note is the appointment of a regular Librarian. On May 16, 1757, the board met at "Scotch Johnny's,"<sup>1</sup> a place of refreshment charmingly situated near the waterside at Whitehall, when and where, "M<sup>r</sup> Benj: Hildreth having

<sup>1</sup> John Thompson, tavern keeper at the Sign of the Crown and Thistle at Whitehall slip, where in 1755 a ferry had been started to Staten Island, then having a population of about 2300.

agreed to execute the Office of a Library Keeper," the sum of £6 was "allowed him annually out of the yearly Subscriptions, for his Trouble & Care while in that Office." He was instructed to give "constant personal Attendance at the Library room two Hours in every week viz! from 2 to 4 o'Clock on every Wednesday Afternoon thro'out y<sup>e</sup> Year, unless prevented by Sick-ness or other unavoidable avocation, when he shall depute some other capable person to attend in his stead, for whose care of the Books he shall be accountable." At the same time, Gabriel Ludlow was ordered to "desire his Son [George Duncan Ludlow], who has for a considerable time generously acted as our Librarian," to get a receipt for the books from Mr. Hildreth.

Quite in contradiction to this action is a notice in the *Mercury* of May 23d, stating that *Joseph* Hildreth was "appointed keeper of the New-York Library," under the same schedule. According to the Treasurer's accounts, the first year's salary was paid to the latter individual, who, however, signed "J. Jos. Hildreth," as though simply acting for another. Thereafter, the duties of the position were discharged by Benjamin until September, 1765.

This first Librarian of the Society Library had been registered a freeman in January, 1752, by occupation a "Distiller." He was the second son of Benjamin Hildreth, "taylor,"<sup>1</sup> a juryman at the famous Zenger trial in 1735. The name of Benjamin, Jr., appears in published sources as having served the community in various capacities. In 1746, as "Captain," he was commissioned to transport some prisoners of war to the French col-

<sup>1</sup> "Abstract of Wills," *Liber* 13, p. 127. *N. Y. Hist. Society Collec-*

*tions for 1894*, p. 233. His will was proved March 22, 1738.

onies; seven years later, the South ward chose him a constable; and on one occasion in 1755 he was paid for delivering fuel to troops on Nutten (Governor's) Island. Prospering in business "at the New Brick Distill-House, near Peck's-Slip," he was living in St. George's Square in 1774, when, as one of "the Principal Male Inhabitants," he signed a petition to Lieutenant-Governor Colden for further suspension of a law prohibiting the erection of wooden buildings in certain parts of town.<sup>1</sup> His older brother, Joseph, an accountant, kept the records of Trinity parish for nearly forty years, and for as long a time was master of its charity school.

In November, 1756, and again in March, 1758, new invoices of books were announced, at a cost of £52 and £70, respectively. Though much smaller than the first consignment, they present as wide a range of interest, in titles, at least. On the arrival of the former of these two, Trustees Cruger and Ludlow were requested to "wait on" Captain Jasper Farmar and Mr. Jacob Franks, "& return them thanks of y<sup>e</sup> trustees, for their Generosity in Giving this Society the freight of the Books, sent for by them." Further, "the Use of the Library, upon y<sup>e</sup> term's of a Subscriber," was voted to the captain,—an early instance of honorary membership.

At the March meeting of 1758, William Livingston "presented to y<sup>e</sup> Trustees a Devise to be engraven & fixed in the Books," which they "thankfully" accepted, and ordered Mr. Vanderspiegel, just appointed to the "gratis" office of Clerk-and-Treasurer, to "get the said Devise engraved & paisted in the Books as soon as he

<sup>1</sup> Valentine's *Manual of the Corporation for 1850*, p. 427 et seq.

agreed to execute the Office of a Library Keeper," the sum of £6 was "allowed him annually out of the yearly Subscriptions, for his Trouble & Care while in that Office." He was instructed to give "constant personal Attendance at the Library room two Hours in every week viz! from 2 to 4 o'Clock on every Wednesday Afternoon thro'out y<sup>e</sup> Year, unless prevented by Sickness or other unavoidable avocation, when he shall depute some other capable person to attend in his stead, for whose care of the Books he shall be accountable." At the same time, Gabriel Ludlow was ordered to "desire his Son [George Duncan Ludlow], who has for a considerable time generously acted as our Librarian," to get a receipt for the books from Mr. Hildreth.

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<sup>1</sup> "Abstract of Wills," *Liber* 13, p. 127. *N. Y. Hist. Society Collections for 1894*, p. 233. His will was proved March 22, 1738.

THE STATE OF NEW YORK

IN SENATE,  
January 1, 1913.  
REPORT  
OF THE  
COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
LAND OFFICE,  
IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION  
PASSED BY THE SENATE  
MAY 1, 1912.  
ALBANY:  
J. B. LEECH, STATE PRINTER,  
1913.

THE LAND OFFICE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK  
HAS THE HONOR TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE RECEIPT  
OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
LAND OFFICE, IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION  
PASSED BY THE SENATE MAY 1, 1912.  
AND TO STATE THAT THE SAME HAS BEEN  
FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE  
SENATE, AND THAT THE REPORT IS  
HEREBY SUBMITTED TO THE SENATE.  
JANUARY 1, 1913.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS OF THE  
LAND OFFICE, IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION  
PASSED BY THE SENATE MAY 1, 1912.  
ALBANY:  
J. B. LEECH, STATE PRINTER,  
1913.

conveniently can." Such was the origin of the Society Library's first bookplate, made within a few months by Elisha Gallaudet, presumably from the suggested design of Mr. Livingston.<sup>1</sup>

Further directions were at the same time given to the new incumbent of the double office, "to get all the Books Number'd in Gilt Letters," and to "immediately order a new Catalogue . . . printed, and . . . furnish every Subscriber with a Copy." Lastly, he was to send a copy to John Ward, the London agent, "and desire him, when ever he observes any Sett of Books want to be compleated, to take particular care to supply the additional Vol<sup>s</sup> by the first Ship after their publication."

That this last commission was executed in due season by the Treasurer-Clerk is proved by some memoranda written in the sole copy of the issue that has come down the years.<sup>2</sup> This diminutive, paper-covered pamphlet of twenty-four pages was presented to the Library, January 25, 1865, by the Hon. Horatio Seymour of New

<sup>1</sup> A receipt, signed "E. Gallaudet" and dated July 26, 1758, shows that the artist was paid £3 10s 6d "for Engraving a Copper Plate for the New York Society Library." On Nov. 29, 1758, Gerardus Duyckinck, stationer, receipted a bill of £3 13s, "for Striking off One Thousand impressions from Copper Plate"; and on the same date Joseph Hildreth acknowledged receipt of 18s, "for pasting devices in ye Books." Following is a description of the plate, appearing in *American Book-Plates* (Charles Dexter Allen, New York, 1894), p. 255: "This plate is armorial in form, but presents no real arms. The central frame, of Chippendale design, contains four quarterings, which represent the arts of Astronomy, Navigation, Geography, Mathematics, and Literature; Religion also is represented. Mercury and Minerva

support the frame, standing upon the ribbon which bears the name; above the frame sits Apollo with his broad back to the full-shining sun; clouds which resemble toy balloons rise about him. Beneath the frame appear the outskirts of a city, with spires and towers visible; directly under this is the word 'Αθήναι (presumably to suggest that New York City was the modern Athens); a closed chest with a lighted candle upon it has these words on it, *sed in candelabro*, and an open book bears across its face the motto, *Nosce teipsum*. Signed, *E. Gallaudet, Sc.* Illustrated in 'Ex Libris Journal,' Vol. III, p. 141."

<sup>2</sup> *A Catalogue of the Books belonging to the New-York Society Library*. New-York: Printed and Sold by H. Gaine, at the Bible and Crown, in Hanover-Square.

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York, a special vote of thanks being at once accorded him by the delighted Trustees. Though its title-page bears no date, a list of new subscribers at the back, penned by either Mr. Vanderspiegel or the Librarian, was begun "13 Sept: 1758." The total number of vol-



First bookplate of the Society Library, engraved by Gallaudet in 1758 (facsimile size). See pp. 166-167.



umes here listed is 859, showing that the collection was slowly growing. Of the membership no definite statement can be made, for the roll as printed is identical with that inscribed in the minutes in 1754, evidently copied from the first published list without additions or corrections, inasmuch as Joseph Murray, for one, had died the year before.

Preceding the catalogue proper comes an "Advertisement," containing "The Conditions for the Loan of Books"; the hours as last stated, from two to four on Wednesdays; and the date of the annual election at the Exchange, "when Gentlemen should come prepar'd to pay their Yearly Subscription, which is ten Shillings." A special "N. B." announces that "Books marked thus \* in the following Catalogue, are an additional Importation per the Charles, Captain Jacklyn."<sup>1</sup> The titles, arranged in alphabetical order only by the initial letter, are further divided into groups according to fold, first the folios, from A to Z, and so on.

Doubtless in response to a growing demand, it was voted in February, 1750, "that the Library be opened Twice a Week"; but no corresponding consideration was shown the Librarian in a resolve that, "unless the Keeper will Attend that Service for the Same Salary heretofore paid, M<sup>r</sup>. John Vanderspiegel have Leave to appoint another that will." Without a murmur, so far as the records tell, Mr. Hildreth continued at his post under double hours, notice of his "Attendance every Monday and Thursday, from half an Hour after Eleven, to one o'Clock," appearing in the local papers for May.

<sup>1</sup> There are 55 such asterisks; while a page of accounts in the minutes shows this confirmatory item: "Rec'd of John V. D. Spiegel Two pounds

for the Freight of a Case of Printed Books from London to New York in the Ship Charles (and Nine pence for Entry). Edm<sup>d</sup> Jacklyne."

From time to time, as funds accumulated, additional works were ordered from abroad, the lists being compiled from "catalogues" of suggested books required of each Trustee. One such list met with a fate happily withheld from any actual consignments amid the fortunes of war; for in May, 1761, the Treasurer was asked to "Send to M<sup>r</sup> Ward, Or to Such Other Person as He Shall think fit, in London, for the Books mentioned in the Catalogue, formerly Sent John Ward, and taken by the Enemy."

In consequence of these accessions, of the same general character as the original collection, a third printed catalogue was necessitated and duly appeared in August, 1761. A single specimen of this publication of 200 copies is also in the possession of the Society Library; it too is from the press of Hugh Gaine,<sup>1</sup> and similar in all respects to the last, being likewise undated. According to its "Advertisement," the Library hours are continued as before. The list of subscribers is again identical with those in former catalogues, a strange recurrence; it must have been repeated simply to put on record the names of the original shareholders, though one would expect a full list of up-to-date members in full standing. The total number of volumes, their titles arranged alphabetically and with more care this time, is 1018, a gain of 159 in three years. One title in particular is of interest, in connection with the story of that survivor of the Trinity Parish Library, now in the Society Library,—a set of "Clarendon's History of the Rebellion."

A very noticeable omission in this last catalogue is the

<sup>1</sup>A Catalogue of the Books belonging to the New-York Society Library. New-York: Printed by H.

Gaine, at the Bible and Crown, in Ha-nover-Square.

schedule of terms for non-subscribers. In May of that year the board had directed the Librarian "not to Suffer any Person not a Subscriber to have any Book Out of the Library for the Future," because many books "hired" by them had been "greatly injured and Abused." At the same time, a committee was charged to "See whether Any and what Books are lost Or Missing," and to "Advertise Such Books as Shall be found Missing." Lastly, the Treasurer was authorized to employ a collector, the first mention of such an assistant, at the modest remuneration of "Ninepence in the Pound." His accounts show that this work was regularly performed by Librarian Hildreth.

Trustee meetings continued to be held in itinerant fashion at one and another of the public houses. It is gratifying to one's curiosity to find that the board patronized our celebrated Fraunces' Tavern, forever renowned as the scene of Washington's "Farewell" to his officers. On March 9, 1764, the Trustees assembled "at the House of M<sup>r</sup> Samuel Francis,"<sup>1</sup> as it is politely expressed in the minutes. The list of books, then "added and sent for," may be quoted in full to show their character, as well as the constant attention paid to enlarging the collection. They are thus entered in the records:

Swift's Works latest & best Edition with Cutts; Lady Mary Worthy Montague's Letters or Travels; Elements of Criticism by Lord Keams; Broughton's History of All Religions; All the Volumes of Warburton's divine Legation of Moses, succeeding the fourth Volume if any; Commons Debates, 1667-1694; Mon-

<sup>1</sup> According to newspaper advertisements, "Samuel Frances" was at that time innkeeper "at the Sign of the Queen's Head, near the Exchange" on Broad street, corner of Queen (Pearl). Within the year

1907 the historic structure was restored by the Society of the Sons of the Revolution, and to-day old Fraunces' Tavern looks as it did when "Black Sam," its West Indian proprietor, flourished.

taign's Essays; St Evremont; Dodly's Collection of Poems; Reflections on the Rise and fall of Ancient Republicks adapted to the present state of G Britain by E. Worthy Montague Esq<sup>r</sup>; The Present State of Europe by John Campbell Esq<sup>r</sup>; The Duke of Sully's Memoirs; Kempfer's History of Japan; Levy's Roman History in English, the best Edition; An Account of the European Settlements in America &c; The Works of Daniel Defoe; Clarendon's History of His own Life; The Adventurer; The Connoisure; Humes Political Discoveries; Voyages from Asia to America for Compleating the Discoveries of the North West Coast of America translated from the High Dutch of S. Muller by Thomas Jeffery's with the Maps; All Sheridan's Works; Fuller's Gymnastic Exercises; Montesqui's Persian Letters.—All Lettered on the Backs.

Although at this time, it will be recalled, the old Corporation Library was taking a repose of two years in storage,<sup>1</sup> pending extensive repairs to the City Hall, there is nothing in the Library minutes to prove that its collection was at all disturbed. The Librarian continued to draw his salary regularly, while Trustee meetings and annual elections were held as usual, at taverns or at the Exchange. That the institution was contributing its share toward these same improvements is inferable from this item in the accounts: "To Cash p<sup>d</sup> Andrew Gautier for Work Done at the Library Room . . . 15<sup>s</sup>," dated March 26, 1764. Again, just a year later, Treasurer Vanderspiegel records: "To Cash p<sup>d</sup> Cleaning the Library Room & Carting Books from my House to the Library Room . . . 10<sup>s</sup> 9<sup>d</sup>" At first sight this last entry might seem to imply that the Society Library's books had also been temporarily removed; but the smallness of the item, coupled with the fact that a new consignment of 180 volumes had just arrived from London, makes that theory the less tenable.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 79.

At all events, by the middle of September, 1765, Thomas Jackson, "Master of the Academy in the Exchange," had begun his duties as Librarian of both Libraries in the City Hall. By the Common Council he was paid £4 a year "for his Trouble," and he received from the Trustees of the Society Library the further sum of £6 per annum. The two collections were to be open to the public as before, on Mondays and Thursdays from 11:30 to one o'clock. Inasmuch as the advertisement in the *Gazette* for September 19, 1765, states no terms for loans, it is probable that the Trustees had made no change since their by-law of June, 1755, repeated in the Catalogues of 1758 and 1761. The rates charged by the Corporation Library have already been quoted.<sup>1</sup>

This same *Gazette* notice reports that the Society Library then had "a large well chosen collection of the most useful modern books, with a considerable late addition, of which a catalogue will be speedily published, that the subscribers may stitch in with their former catalogues." Sad to relate, the surviving copies of those earlier publications contain not this supplement, printed in the fall of 1766 by Hugh Gaine. It may, however, have become parted from their company, for their present condition might properly be termed *unstitched*! The interesting statement then follows that "A share in this Library is now worth 10 l. 10 s.," which quotation indicates increased market valuation. Further on appears this list of books, advertised as "missing":

Ludlow's memoirs, fol. Wood's institutes of common law, fol. Hogarth's analysis, 4to, Cowley's works, vol. 1st. Shakespear, vol. 2d. Rolt of the late war, vol. 4th. Clogher's journal. Life of Richlieu, 2 vols. De la Sale's voyages. Henepin's trav-

<sup>1</sup> See p. 79.

els. Life of Sir Matthew Hale, 12mo. Life of the duke of Marlborough. Thompson's travels. Voyage to Peru. Christian hero. Conclusion of bishop Burnet's history. Adventurer, vol. 4th. Select trials at the Old Bailey, vol. 3d. Rowe's works, vol. 2d.

Contrary to custom, but perhaps out of deference to the engagements of Mayor Hicks, one of their number, the Trustees met on December 17, 1766, "in the Library-Room at the City Hall." After ordering Treasurer Vanderspiegel to pay all salary arrears to Messrs. Benjamin Hildreth and Thomas Jackson, it was voted that the Librarian thenceforth be paid quarterly. Thereupon, that officer was requested "to observe punctually" a certain "standing Rule" of the Library as to the limitation of its privileges to delinquents. Next they acknowledged from Messrs. Robert Barclay and Daniel Milledred, "in Name of the Society of Friends at London . . . Eight Volumes of the principal Writings for that People." And lastly Messrs. Vanderspiegel, W. Livingston and Rutherford were deputed to prepare "a List of the new Books now proposed to be sent for, and to recommend to their Correspondent at London to send the Books as mentioned in the Order of the List as far as the Money in the Hands of the Treasurer will pay for." This measure had been announced in the *Mercury* of December 15th as the chief object of assembling, and "all the Proprietors" were urged "in the mean Time to send a Catalogue of such Books as they think proper for that Purpose to Mr. Jackson, the Librarian, to be then submitted to the Judgement of the Trustees."

For many years no mention was made of domestic purchases of books. But in February, 1770, an order was given to James Rivington, printer, publisher of

*Rivington's New-York Gazetteer*, and a bookseller as well, at his "open and uninfluenced Press, fronting Hanover-Square"; and a committee was asked to "Make a fair List of such books as are Agreed on to be purchas<sup>d</sup> & in case they cannot be purchased here Cheeper or as Cheep as they Can be sent for, that then M<sup>r</sup> Vanderspiegel do send for them,"—the minute being self-explanatory as to why local dealers had not been patronized hitherto. Thenceforth, until the Revolution summarily closed all accounts, Mr. Rivington, together with "some Bookseller in London," played no minor part in supplying needs of the institution. Over a year after this incident, a list of books, "lately received" through Rivington's agency, appeared in *Gaine's Gazette and Mercury* of April 15, 1771, as follows:

Handmaid to Arts, Anderson on Commerce, Hook's Roman History, Fitzosborne's Letters, Smith's moral Sentiments, Ferguson on civil Society, Dalrymple on Feudal Property, Annual Register, Delaney's Revelation examined with Candour, Gerard on Taste, Felton on the Classics, Reid on the Mind, Ferguson's Astronomy, Ferguson's Lectures, Burk on the Sublime, Biographical Dictionary, Vatel's Law of Nations.

During the brief space of time remaining before the outbreak of war, the Trustees continued to assemble for deliberation and refreshment at Widow Brock's wayside inn, which stood "near the old City Hall in Wall-street," the newspapers tell. But little business appears to have been transacted, beyond looking out for missing books, contracting for new ones, and regulating the duration of loans. In February, 1770, it was enacted that a folio might be "detained" six weeks; a quarto, four; an octavo, three; and a duodecimo, two weeks,

further retention entailing a "forfitt" of four, three, and two pence and "one penney" a day, respectively.

Within these years several changes took place in the incumbency of the Librarian's office. Thomas Jackson, appointed to the two-fold charge of the Society Library and the old Corporation Library in September, 1765, was a man of cultivation and ability. In 1762 he had conducted on Wall street a private classical school,<sup>1</sup> which, in consequence of success, he was encouraged to remove, in May, 1765, to more pretentious quarters in the Exchange, "the best house in town for a publick school,"<sup>2</sup> "at the Rent of Sixty Pounds."<sup>3</sup> Here he entered into a brief partnership with Peter Wilson, "a young gentleman, who with the greatest approbation, finished a regular course of education in the University of Aberdeen, and also assisted for two years, to great satisfaction, in teaching."<sup>2</sup> This is an early allusion to one of the leading educators of his time, afterward to serve for many years as a Trustee of the Society Library. The pair advertised an "Academy" of instruction in "all branches of useful education," for "gentlemen and ladies of eight years old and upwards." Several months later, coincidentally with his new Library duties, this active man started another enterprise, heralded in the *Mercury* of September 30th as follows:

**A**N evening school, for the greater convenience of young people, will be opened this evening Sept. 30, in Mr. Jackson's academy, at the Exchange; where will be taught, reading, writing, cyphering, book-keeping, navigation, geography and

<sup>1</sup> *History of the School of the Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church.* New York, 1883. P. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *The New-York Gazette; or the Weekly Post-Boy*, May 2, 1765.

<sup>3</sup> *Minutes of the Common Council*, vol. VI, p. 409.



algebra. Punctual attendance will be given, and proper pains taken for the benefit of the scholars.

While residing in New York, Mr. Jackson was a devoted member of the English Presbyterian Church, which he served as elder and as clerk of the session. With others, including William Smith, Garrat Noel and Peter Van Brugh Livingston, elders, and William Smith, Jr., and John Morin Scott, trustees, he formulated a petition to the city fathers in 1766 for "the Angular Piece of Ground,"<sup>1</sup> on which the "Old Brick" Church was so long to stand. The time and occasion of his leaving New York are thus recorded in the ancient "Session Book," under date of August 26, 1768: "M<sup>r</sup> Thomas Jackson a worthy Member of this Session, having applied himself to the Ministry & removed out of the City, is no longer considered a Member of this Judicature." So far as his Library work was concerned, he seems to have employed a deputy at the last, as the Treasurer's records show that the usual £6 for the year ending May 1, 1768, was paid to one Alexander Miller, "for M<sup>r</sup> Tho<sup>s</sup> Jackson." During the next six years the post of Librarian was held by James Wilmot.

Throughout these years the subscribers had met regularly on the last Tuesday in April,<sup>2</sup>—as has been the practice ever since,—though at varying times of day, the hour for the first decade and more being eleven in the forenoon. No further contests appear to have arisen, and, as has been said, the old board was usually reelected.

<sup>1</sup> *Minutes of the Common Council*, vol. VII, pp. 5-6, 8-12.

<sup>2</sup> On one occasion, in 1771, a notice was issued in *Gaine's Gazette and Mercury* of April 15th, calling the annual meeting for the 16th, at the

usual hour, at the Exchange, when "some matters of importance"—probably the discussion of a charter—were to be "proposed." A week later, however, members were properly advised of the "Mistake."

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The last act of moment to chronicle for this first period in the history of the Society Library is the appointment, in February, 1771, of Samuel Jones, elected a Trustee the preceding April, as Treasurer to succeed John Vanderspiegel, deceased.<sup>1</sup> In passing, it will be observed that the clause in the original Articles, forbidding a Trustee to hold the office of Treasurer, had been systematically ignored from the beginning. It had doubtless been found far easier in the management to have that officer a member of the board; while any apprehensions that framers of the Articles may have entertained regarding proper disposal of the funds had evidently not been shared by members at large, when once the machinery of administration had been set in motion.

<sup>1</sup> The *Gazette* of Feb. 4, 1771, contained a summons to "Subscribers and Trustees of the Society Library" to meet "at the House of Mrs. Brock" on the 19th, "at six o'clock in the Evening to choose a Trustee

and elect a Treasurer, in the Room of Mr. Vanderspiegle, deceased." Goldsbrow Banyar was elected to the board, which thereupon chose Mr. Jones, Treasurer.

### III

FROM THE ROYAL CHARTER, 1772, TO THE REVOLUTION, 1776

**T**HERE is no question that the founders of the Society Library looked forward with confidence to a time, not remote, when they should secure their undertaking on the strong and enduring basis of incorporation. Such had been the original aim, as recorded by one of their little company, William Smith, Jr., that "it would be very proper for the Company to have a Charter for its Security and Encouragement"<sup>1</sup>; yet more than eighteen years were to elapse before attaining that object. It is not easy, in the lack of evidence, to offer a convincing explanation of this apparent and protracted indifference.

It may be that the strenuous injection of politics into the enterprise at the start, let alone the evident worsting of his own party, may have so disaffected Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey that he lost interest in the Library and could not be induced to sanction its incorporation. Then, too, the international life-and-death struggle for mastery on the American continent was absorbing the attention and energies of provincial authorities to the exclusion of aught else, during the first half of this very period.

<sup>1</sup> *History of the Province of New York*. London, 1787. P. 195.

Nevertheless, some gleam of hope must have shone out, possibly from De Lancey himself, for in October, 1759, Benjamin Nicoll, William Smith, Jr., and William Alexander were deputed to prepare "the Draft of a Charter for InCorporating the Society agreeable to the Articles & Lay it before the Trustees with all Convenient Speed." But this slight glimmer was extinguished not many months later by the sudden death of the lieutenant-governor.

Dr. Cadwallader Colden, who presently succeeded as acting executive, must have entertained a prejudice against the Library. He certainly never evinced enough interest even to become a member, an astonishing fact when his cultivated and scholarly tastes are taken into account. Always at odds with his predecessor, he was ever only too conscious of the antipathy also existing between himself and "those Presbyterian lawyers," as he termed Livingston, Smith and Scott. Consequently there was slim chance to consummate their purpose throughout his term of office. No encouragement, furthermore, seems to have been offered by successive royal governors, Monckton, Moore and Dunmore, during their brief tenure.

Early in the incumbency of Governor Tryon, however, a renewed and successful attempt was finally made, in an order of December 4, 1771, "that M<sup>r</sup> Jones prepare a Draft of a Charter for incorporating the members of the Library and lay it before the Trustees at their next meeting." Besides the anticipation of executive favor, there was yet another motive impelling to a speedy accomplishment of the long-deferred project. Oft-times competition will stimulate to activity even more cogently than sympathetic interest alone. Possibly such

was true in this case, for, on the very day before the meeting just chronicled, there had been issued the prospectus of the Union Library Society of New York.<sup>1</sup> For more than seventeen years the Society Library had been the only establishment of its kind in the community, cordially sanctioned by the city government as well as by the general public; but now a rival suddenly springs up to contest its influence, if not its very existence.

From the standing of the sponsors of the new institution, and in view of the very reasonable charges advertised, the older organization had clearly a serious situation to face. Although the minutes record no mention of this event, or of any apprehensions on its score, the Trustees were fully alive to its import. Too much careful planning and hard work had been expended in behalf of their trust to lose ground now, when so near attainment of the long-distant goal. Spurred to action, *Incorporation* became their slogan.

At the January meeting in 1772, Samuel Jones accordingly produced the desired draft of a charter, which was read and agreed upon by the board after some slight emendation. A petition, "praying for a Grant of the Charter," was then drawn up and signed; and Mr. Jones was requested to present it to the governor, after securing the signatures of four absent members. The first volume of the old records thereupon concludes with proclaiming the election, on the last Tuesday in April, 1772, of "the same Trustees as the last Year." A gap of thirteen months stretches between the first two books of minutes, in which interval the charter had passed the provincial seals, with the signature of Governor William Tryon on November 9, 1772.

<sup>1</sup> See Introduction, pp. 112-118, 120.

Well might the second volume of proceedings open with a flourish, amid sounding of trumpets and haut-boys! Here indeed, if nowhere else in the formal record of events, a note of self-congratulation would assuredly be appropriate. But the laconic equipoise of the entries is unfailing. Not a trace of enthusiasm, or even of satisfaction, is discernible in the simple statement that, "at the Tavern kept by Sarah Brock . . . on Thursday the seventh Day of January 1773," in the presence of a bare quorum, "the Charter for the said Library was produced and read."

Immediately following comes a draft of the precious document in full, covering some fifteen pages of the old folio; in the absence of the original instrument, additional interest attaches to this contemporary copy, elegantly written throughout. Columbia University fitly cherishes to-day the actual charter granted to King's College in 1754 by Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey, as the representative of King George II. No less may the Society of the New York Hospital rejoice in possessing under glass its deed of incorporation, bestowed by the Earl of Dunmore with the sanction of King George III in 1771. Still greater cause for complacency have the corporations of the Reformed Dutch Church and Old Trinity in having preserved similarly authoritative evidences of legal establishment, signed by Governor Fletcher in the days of King William III in 1696 and 1697, respectively. But the Society Library—like the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, chartered in March, 1770, under Lieutenant-Governor Colden—has suffered irreparable loss in this particular respect. There is no knowledge of the actual destruction of the missing parchment, but the great



hope that it may sometime be restored grows ever less with the years.<sup>1</sup>

Like other royal charters, this document is unparagraphed, from the salutation of the king, in all his titled majesty, to the signature of Governor Tryon at the end. With stately pomp there comes first the customary greeting from "George the Third, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, and so forth." The preamble recites the names of that year's Trustees, classifying them as *Esquires, Merchants, Gentlemen, and Physician*. It also includes extracts from their petition, which in turn reads like a recapitulation of the old Articles of 1754. Still quoting the petition, the instrument continues:

By which Means the said Library was become very considerable, but would increase much faster, and might be made of greater publick Utility if a Corporation should be formed for that Purpose. . . . Now we taking into our Royal Consideration the beneficial Tendency of such an Institution within our said City, are graciously pleased to grant the said humble Request of our said loving Subjects. KNOW YE THEREFORE, That we of our especial Grace, certain Knowledge and mere Motion, have willed, given, granted, ordained, constituted and appointed, and by these Presents, Do will, give, grant, ordain, constitute and appoint, That the said . . . [naming the twelve Trustees and then other members, to include seventeen *Esquires*, one *Doctor of Divinity*, twenty *Merchants*, three *Gentlemen*, two *Distillers*, one *Printer*, one *Apothecary*, one *Surgeon*, and one *Widow*,—fifty-nine in all]: Being such of the Subscribers to the said Library,

<sup>1</sup>There is no record of the time when the charter disappeared. It is said to have been in the Library's possession as late as 1850. The original draft of the document, containing 16 pp. folio, is in vol. 5 (1772-1775) of "Original Drafts of Land Patents," State Library, Albany. It

of course bears no signatures. The Executive Council minutes (MS.) record receipt of a petition for incorporation under date of Sept. 8, 1772; but the original paper is missing. See *Calendar of Council Minutes, 1668-1783*. Albany, 1902. P. 567.



or their Assigns, as have not only paid the said Sum of *Five Pounds*, but also the said *Ten Shillings* yearly, ever since; and such other Persons as shall be hereafter admitted Members of the Corporation hereby erected, be, and for ever hereafter shall be by Virtue of these Presents, One Body Corporate and Politic in Deed, Fact and Name, by the Name, Stile, and Title of **THE TRUSTEES OF THE NEW-YORK SOCIETY LIBRARY.**

Next are conferred unreservedly all the rights incident to a corporation, including perpetual succession, capacity to sue and to be sued, the holding of property, possession of a seal, and the liberty to erect a Library building and other structures. There should continue to be, it goes on to state, twelve Trustees to conduct the affairs of the institution; and that, as hitherto, on the last Tuesday in April, "yearly and every Year for ever thereafter," the members should meet at the Exchange in Broad street, "or at some other convenient Place in our said City of New York," to elect Trustees.

Then come provisions for filling vacancies in the board, for calling meetings, for determining a quorum, for passing, amending or repealing by-laws,—not to be repugnant to the statutes of New York or to the laws of England,—and for appointing a Treasurer, a Secretary and a Librarian. Members were to be privileged to sell, assign or devise their rights, such assigns to become members in full standing, but only when owning whole shares; and the Trustees might elect as members of the corporation whom they should think proper. After regulating the annual dues (ten shillings), the penalties for arrears, forfeitures, etc., it is stated in conclusion that the charter should be "deemed, adjudged and construed in all Cases, most favourably and for the best Benefit and Advantage of our said Corporation."

There is afforded here for the first time an opportunity to compare the membership with that at the outset. The fifty-nine names mentioned in the charter show a falling-off of exactly fifty per cent. from the original subscription list. But it must be borne in mind that numerous "rights" had been bequeathed, or otherwise "alienated," during these eighteen years; while not a few members held several shares. Thus it cannot be told just how many paying shares there were. Undoubtedly, however, there had not been anything like the substantial accessions hoped for, if increase there had been.

How agitated and proud these sturdy workers must have been to behold realized at last their cherished hopes of many years! Content to labor and to wait for the success now attained, they must have felt the happiness of the moment well worth all the weary planning and the time and money spent. It is good to find at least a few of the prime movers of the undertaking still on the board of Trustees, namely, William Smith the historian, Robert R. Livingston and William Livingston, together with John Watts, who had served, with the exception of but a single year, from the beginning to the now fast-approaching political convulsion.

In the first flush of their triumph and increased importance, however, they were not unmindful of favors received. Their initial act as a corporation was to confer honorary membership upon Governor Tryon, Attorney-General John Tabor Kempe, and William Banyar, nephew of Goldsbrow Banyar, deputy-secretary of the province, through whose united instrumentality the charter had been gratuitously granted and passed. Each of the three was to receive a certificate of

admission, it was voted, with the naïve qualification, "as soon as one shall be procured."

After a careful revision of the by-laws,—the schedule of loans and penalties being identical with the last statement, but the hours of attendance increased to three days, Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, from twelve to two, "Holy-Days excepted,"—the Trustees, clothed in their new powers, proceeded to appoint, or really to confirm, Samuel Jones as Treasurer and James Wilmot as "Keeper of the said Library." A departure was made in appointing Dr. Samuel Bard, Secretary, an office formerly identified, as "Clerk," with the treasurer-ship. It was then voted to have the "Terms of Admission" published for three weeks "in the News Paper printed by Hugh Gainé," who should also have the contract for printing the charter, by-laws and a fresh catalogue. Finally the Treasurer was ordered to "lay before this Board at the next Meeting a Device for a Seal."

In compliance with the first of these directions, a notice that the Trustees had "obtained a Charter of Incorporation," and would "now admit new Members upon Payment of Five Pounds each, for the Use of the Library," appeared in *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury* for three weeks, beginning on January 11th. It also announced the speedy issuance of a new catalogue, which was promptly forthcoming. This Catalogue of 1773, a copy of which the Library is so fortunate as to own, though a larger affair than the earlier issues, is yet but a modest paper-covered pamphlet of thirty-six pages.<sup>1</sup> Eight pages are devoted to a

<sup>1</sup> *The Charter, and Bye-Laws, of the New-York Society Library; with a Catalogue of the Books belonging to the said Library.* New York, 1773. Gainé's receipt shows that he was paid £10 8s for 300 copies.

closely printed copy of the charter, and three succeeding pages comprehend revised "Laws, Ordinances, and Regulations." The catalogue proper contains a total of 1291 volumes, the last accounting before their shameful dispersion.

To revert to the charter,—some little amusement may have been excited at the last-named incorporator, "Anne Waddel, Widow," as though that title were her calling in life! John Waddell, her husband, had been one of the original subscribers to the Library movement, and it is interesting to see how she was here perpetuating his as well as her own regard for the institution. It is also noteworthy that a woman's name should have been allowed to stand on such a very legal document, showing that there was no law to forbid, nor, fully as requisite, any social convention either.<sup>1</sup> As in this instance, so throughout its history, the Society Library has ever welcomed women to enrolment as shareholders, with unrestricted access to the shelves.

It would be needless to make this trite statement, were it not for the fact that such an attitude is quite in contrast to that evinced by the Boston Athenæum, for example, where no women were allowed to consult books prior to 1829, nor for some years thereafter, save in one or two exceptional cases. As late as 1856, Librarian Folsom of that institution reported it "as undesirable, that a modest young woman should have anything to do with the corrupter portions of the polite literature. A considerable portion of a general library should be to her a sealed book." He further asserts that the proposed

<sup>1</sup> Anne (Kirten) Waddell, born in 1716, was a lady of uncommon ability and force of character, conducting her husband's large shipping

interests (after his decease in 1762) with great profit, until her own death in 1773.

concession to admit women to the shelves "would occasion frequent embarrassment to modest men."<sup>1</sup>

Before continuing the narrative, a further word is pertinent in regard to the Union Library Society. As we have seen,<sup>2</sup> this institution thrived and bade fair to become no slight menace to the prosperity of the Society Library. No sooner had the latter's incorporation been announced in the newspapers, than the Directors of the younger institution promptly published a notice, emphasizing their moderate terms, stating their collection to contain "near 1000 volumes," and claiming a membership of 140 persons,—rather more than double the number of shareholders enumerated a few months before in the charter of the Society Library.

Furthermore, the action of the Common Council in April, 1774, allowing the Union Library Society to deposit its books in the same room that held their own collection, must have been unspeakably irritating to the pride of the Trustees, so lately exalted by the investiture of chartered rights. It was indeed but a shabby return by the city fathers for the care of the old Corporation Library during so many years, for there is no mention in the municipal records that the city paid for a Librarian after Thomas Jackson retired in 1768. Truly the hazards of war would then have seemed to the Trustees hardly more insupportable than so forced and distasteful a companionship.

Less than thirty days after this ungracious act of the Common Council, and fully sixteen months since a recorded session of the board, there was held what proved to be the last meeting of the Trustees for many a

<sup>1</sup> Report, March 29, 1856. MS. in *Influence and History of the Boston Athenæum*. Boston, 1907. P. 41.

<sup>2</sup> See Introduction, pp. 112-118.

day. Eleven members constituted this gathering, at the Exchange, May 9, 1774. Various matters came up for consideration, both retrospectively and, as they doubtless supposed, for the unbroken future. In the first place, acting on previous instructions, "the Treasurer and Secretary laid before the Trustees a Device for a Seal of which they approved," and ordered "to have it immediately cast in Steel."

Several cheering items next gladden the eye: the treasury shows a balance of £116:7:9½; and five new members had lately been enrolled, including the Rev. Dr. Inglis, fourth rector of Trinity Church, the Rev. John H. Livingston, of the Dutch Reformed communion, and John Jones, M.D.,—the last-named just chosen a Trustee, and the second destined to serve fully a quarter-century later. Also it was recorded that "M<sup>r</sup> Sam<sup>l</sup> Verplank purchased the Share of M<sup>r</sup> Rob<sup>t</sup> Cromline and paid up the arrears,"—the first mention of such a transfer in the minutes. Encouragement from these evidences of prosperity appears in the single entry: "*Ordered*, That M<sup>r</sup> Kettletass purchase one dozen Winsor Chairs, and two step Ladders for the use of the Library."

Quite a notable departure from custom was made in a vote to hold the annual meetings for the future at the City Hall instead of at the Exchange. Another by-law, then adopted, fixed Trustee meetings "for the Dispatch of Business . . . at the Library Room upon the first Tuesday in y<sup>e</sup> months of Aprill, July, October, and January at twelve o'Clock at noon." After agreeing "to the purchase of Books of wh<sup>h</sup> a Catalogue" was exhibited, and voting that all volumes "wanting to complete old sets be replaced," it was finally "*Order'd*, That

Doct. John Jones, M<sup>r</sup> Kettletass, M<sup>r</sup> Treasurer, Peter Vanschaaek, or any three of them, be a Committy to do the above Business."

Having ascertained the character of the original collection, and knowing who were the early members of the Society Library, the natural wish follows, as the night the day, to learn something of the actual handling of the books; who read what! Happily this desire it is possible to gratify to a slight extent, for there remains a discolored rough draft of a manuscript catalogue in folio, without date or cover, not untidily fastened by a once blue ribbon. Following some twenty of the titles in a fragmentary fashion are jotted down the names of occasional borrowers throughout the colonial period, as follows:

Addison's Works 4 Vols. (4<sup>th</sup> Vol. wanting), John Provoost; Bacon's Works, 3 Vols. (1<sup>st</sup> Vol. want.), Basnages History of the Jews, Ab<sup>m</sup> Depeyster, Oct<sup>r</sup> 29, 1767; Columelle on Husbandry and Trees, Ja<sup>s</sup> Depeyster by Peter Dubois, June 15, 1766; Chubb's posthumous Works, 2 Vols., Peter V B Livingston, April 9<sup>th</sup> 1770; Cicero's Orations by Guthrie, 3 Vols., Cornelius Van Horne, 7<sup>th</sup> Sept<sup>r</sup> 1769; Albers Lives of the Poets, 5 Vols. (1<sup>st</sup> Vol. wanting), Edw<sup>d</sup> Nicoll, May 12, 1766; Cato's Letters, 4 Vols. (1<sup>st</sup> Vol. wanting), Phil. Livingston, 14 March, 1768; Franklin on Electricity, Augustus V Cortlandt, August 10, 1756; Grandison, 7 Vols., Nathan<sup>l</sup> Marston, March 13, 1769; Kiel's Astronomy, W<sup>m</sup> Laight, 24 Sept<sup>r</sup> 1772; Kiesler's Travels, 4 Vols. (1<sup>st</sup> Vol. wanting), W<sup>m</sup> Imlay, March 7, 1753 [1773?]; Maintenon's Letters, 2 Vols., Stephen D'Lancey, Sept<sup>r</sup> 22, 1766; Montague's Letters, 4 Vols., y<sup>e</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>d</sup> W<sup>m</sup> Smith Sen<sup>r</sup> Ap 28<sup>th</sup> 1768; Philosophical Transactions, 10 Vols., Ab<sup>m</sup> Brinckerhoff; ancient History, 10 Vols. (1<sup>st</sup> Vol. want<sup>d</sup>), Rob<sup>t</sup> G. Livingston, Dec<sup>r</sup> 19, 1765; System of Geography, 2 Vols., Henry Remsen; Sheridans Lectures on Elocution, Jn<sup>o</sup> Living-

ston, Dec<sup>r</sup> 6, 1768; Warburton's Shakespear, 8 Vols. (ye 2<sup>d</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> Vols. want<sup>d</sup>), 6<sup>th</sup> Vol., L. Cortwright, October 6<sup>th</sup> 1768; Whiston's Theory of the Earth, Alex<sup>r</sup> Cummings, Dec<sup>r</sup> 28<sup>th</sup> 1757; Waller's Poems, John Dies, Apr<sup>l</sup> 5, 1762.

In accordance with the new by-law, notice of the annual meeting and election of 1775—"to be held at Twelve o'Clock at Noon, in the Library Room"—was duly inserted by Secretary Bard in the *Gazette* for April 24th. But from a minute of later date it appears that "no meeting of the proprietors for the choice of Trustees was held from the last Tuesday in April 1774," until December 20, 1788. Consequently we must assume that the board last elected continued in office, "until other fit Persons" were "chosen in their Places,"—to quote the language of the charter. During these fourteen years no meetings appear to have been held; and one would think the business of the corporation wholly suspended in 1774, were it not for the above mentioned newspaper notice and certain memoranda by Treasurer Jones in the old minute books.

Furthermore, there has survived a receipt for £5, signed by George Murray, for "half a Year's Attendance as Librarian from July the 6<sup>th</sup> to Jan<sup>y</sup> 6<sup>th</sup> 1776." From the Treasurer's meager accounts it appears that Mr. Murray had succeeded James Wilmot on May 1, 1774, at an advance of £4 a year, for attending "three times a Week." Of these two persons, little can now be told. James Wilmot's name appears among the 3000 signatures of "Principal Male Inhabitants"<sup>1</sup> in 1774, while George Murray, a Quaker, kept a select school on Crown (Liberty) street, opposite the Friends' Meeting

<sup>1</sup> See p. 166n.



House.<sup>1</sup> He reopened this institution in April, 1783,<sup>2</sup> but died a few months later "at an advanced age."<sup>3</sup>

For aught now known to the contrary, therefore, George Murray was the last Librarian before the Revolution; while there is nothing to prove that the work of the Library did not continue as usual until September, 1776, save the natural belief, as expressed in the manuscript "Matricula" of King's College for that year, that "The Turbulence & Confusion which prevail in every part of the Country effectually suppress every literary Pursuit." Still, a positive indication of Library activity appears in a notice in the *Mercury*, August 7, 1775, calling for the return, "without Delay," of some thirty-odd books "belonging to the New-York Society Library."

No little pathos may be read into the detailed and careful deliberations at the last meeting outlined above, in view of the fact that more than fourteen long years of stress and anxiety were to run their course before another gathering would be held, at which, indeed, only four of this group would respond to roll-call. The Society Library, with kindred institutions of culture and of peace, was early to undergo suspension and well-nigh complete disruption at the blighting touch of war. In the record of this last assembling of its Trustees before the storm, however, no note of apprehension was sounded, matters relative to the welfare of the association alone finding attention. It is altogether fitting that the curtain should go down with all the actors in

<sup>1</sup> *New York City during the American Revolution*, New York, 1861. P. 91.

<sup>2</sup> *The New-York Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury*, Apl. 28, 1783.

<sup>3</sup> *Rivington's Royal Gazette*, Sept. 10, 1783.

their proper places, conscientiously playing their appointed parts.

What poor beleaguered New York suffered in the throes of revolution it happily does not fall within the bounds of this narrative to recount. Possessing from its situation one of the chief strategic points in the colonies, it was indeed a vantage-ground to be fought for desperately. Within the city, feeling had long been running high between malcontents and upholders of prerogative, and had voiced itself in repeated outbreaks between the ardent Liberty Boys and his Majesty's troops. The British occupation of seven years had good effect in stopping these bickerings perforce, but it was none the less notorious for lawless practices of the soldiery. A spirited account of such depredations as pertain to this study has already been quoted in connection with the history of King's College Library.<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, in the same section of the present work, are given details of efforts on the part of British commanders to accomplish a return of at least a portion of the plundered collections.<sup>2</sup> In commenting on these outrages, Judge Jones condescendingly observes: "To do justice even to rebels, let it be here mentioned that though they were in full possession of New York nearly seven months, and had in it at times above 40,000 men, neither of these libraries were ever meddled with (the telescope which General Washington took excepted)"<sup>3</sup> In a similar spirit of fairness, therefore, it must be admitted that the invaders were not alone in the destruction of books, though for sheer wantonness and cupidity

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 94-95.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 95-97.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Jones. *History of New York during the Revolutionary*

*War*. Vol. II, p. 137. This telescope now adorns the mantel of the beautiful Trustees' Room in the Library of Columbia University.

they stand unrivaled. It is said that in one instance a whole edition of the Rev. Gilbert Tennent's sermon, "Defensive War," printed by Franklin, "was utilized by revolted colonists for the manufacture of musket cartridges to aid in driving King George's Hessian mercenaries off the soil, and to establish American liberty in place of foreign tyranny."<sup>1</sup>

However this may have been, the one melancholy indisputable fact remains that all the Libraries of the city were either burned or looted, their precious contents ruthlessly scattered to the four winds. Not least among them, the Society Library, the fruit of more than twenty years of planning, of labor and of sacrifice, was in a twinkling stricken seemingly with utter annihilation.

In the eighteen years ending with 1776, only ten new names appear on the board of Trustees. Two were merchants of high repute: Walter Rutherford,—styled "Gentleman" in the charter,—a Scotchman by birth, a founder and for some years president of St. Andrew's Society, an incorporator and later a governor of the New York Hospital, a brother-in-law of the Earl of Sterling, was a man of unblemished integrity; as was also his associate, Samuel Verplanck, a scion of one of the oldest Dutch families, a member of the first class graduated by King's College in 1758, a Wall Street importer and banker of scholarly tastes, one of the twenty-four founders of the Chamber of Commerce, a member of the "General Committee of One Hundred" in 1775, a delegate to the provincial convention of New York, and a subscriber to the celebrated Declaration of Association and Union against the pretensions of Great

<sup>1</sup> *The Memorial History of the City of New-York*, vol. IV, p. 115.

Britain; though, from dread of consequences, it is stated, inactive in support of the Revolution.

Three of them have lent distinction to the noble healing art: John and Samuel Bard, father and son, Philadelphians by birth, though of mingled French and English ancestry. Gifted alike with engaging manners, unusual ability and capacity for hard work, they numbered among their intimate friends Franklin and other noted persons in America and Europe. They were instrumental in securing a charter of incorporation for a public hospital, and in raising funds privately for its support. Dr. Samuel Bard was chief agent in founding the first medical school in New York, soon annexed to the college. On its staff for forty years, he also served as a trustee and dean of its medical faculty, and was likewise a vestryman of Trinity parish. While the city was the seat of the Federal Government, he acted as Washington's family physician, a circumstance tending to allay distrust aroused by his moderate course during the war. His services to the Library cover an extended term as Trustee and Secretary.

The name of John Jones long stood at the head of the surgical profession in this country. A professor in King's College, he was a pioneer in introducing plain and simple measures in place of prevailing methods. Removing to Philadelphia and achieving renown, he became the medical attendant and as well the friend of Dr. Franklin.

Half of the number were members of the legal brotherhood. Whitehead Hicks, fellow-student with William Livingston and William Smith, Jr., under the latter's father, became an alderman and held the mayoralty for the long term of nearly ten years. He resigned

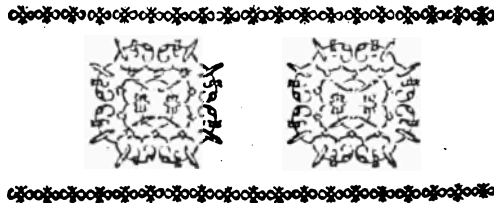
for a judgeship in the supreme court, but, owing to his Whig principles, never took his seat. Besides the Library, he served the Presbyterian Church as a trustee for

A

CATALOGUE  
*John Stevenson*  
OF THE  
BOOKS

BELONGING TO THE

NEW-YORK Society LIBRARY.



NEW-YORK:

Printed and Sold by D. Gaine, at the Bible and Crown,  
in Hanover-Square.

(Probably 1758. ) M.S. B

Earliest catalogue of the Society Library, or of any Library in New York,  
known to be in existence (facsimile size). See pp. 167-168.

